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THE WONDERFUL IDEA

By Edgar Fawcett

FOR a while the conversation was general. "You're not changed a bit, Bianca," said Lady Fortescue. "You look as much as ever like a white orchid transformed into a girl."

"Very well said, my dear Lady Fortescue!" exclaimed Leith Osmond, a lean young man who would have been handsome but for the size and prominence of his ears, which combined with a restless expression to give him an incessant air of listening; "but really, can the inexpressible be expressed?"

"Not about our dear Bianca's hair and eyes!" animatedly declared the stodgy little Countess of St. James.

"Very easily, I assure you," murmured the elderly Major Cotsworth, smirking and twisting his imperial; "Miss Rotheroyd's hair is sunset, and her eyes are evening."

"Bravo, Major!" smilingly applauded several.

"My dear Bianca," said Mrs. Barclay Boyd, "I'm sure you never had any prettier tribute paid you in America."

"They fed her on a diet of sugar-plums over there," grinned Gale, the manager.

"The poets were all inspired," added Alan Crieff, the leading man, "and vied with each other in singing her praises."

"I'm so glad," said Elsa Dreeme, a bony girl clad in esthetic violet draperies that grotesquely clung and trailed. She thought Alan Crieff the most beautiful young man in the world. She was an artist, or so esteemed herself, and had painted six portraits of him in as many years,

three having been refused by the Royal Academy and three by the New Gallery. "Somebody sent me such an unkind article; from Chicago, I think it came. Poor, dear Miss Rotheroyd was very spitefully treated. I mean as *Juliet*. The writer said that if she went on playing this part it should be taken out of the title and *Romeo* should alone remain there. Could anything be nastier?"

Mrs. Boyd turned on the speaker with a tart smile. "It is not the most amiable thing in the world to repeat such malice," she remarked.

Immediately Bianca struck in: "I remember the article perfectly. It was very slashing. I wonder who could have sent it to you." Her eyes fixed for a moment on Crieff's face, and he perceptibly flushed. Then her voice quietly floated through the room, as if she were addressing everybody yet no one in particular. "I played poorly in *Juliet*, and I did not do at all well, later on, in *Beatrice*." At Gale's frown she made an impatient gesture. "The truth is, I am not in any sense a Shakespearean actress. A play like 'Judith,' a play saturated with modern sentiment and suggestiveness, is the only sort of work I am now safely assured it lies in my power to do. After long thought and much self-questioning I have reached this conviction." Her voice and manner took a very sweet earnestness; never had she been the least of an actress off the stage, and on it she had never shown herself more humanly natural than while she spoke the next words.

"It has cost me great regret, it has

cost me deep sorrow, to realize that the lovely realm of our most marvelous dramatist should lie so completely beyond my reach. 'Judith' is admirable of its kind, but the author, my dear and good friend here, Oliver Wraybourne, would be the first to admit that it does not portray a character of the higher order, that it is a study of perversity, coquetry, faultiness, actual sin. I do not want to go on playing such parts. And since a firm confidence has now possessed me that I can play no others, I have come back to England with a single, unaltering intention. I shall act no more. I have left the stage."

"Left the stage!" cried twenty voices, in as many differing tones. It was a little abrupt dithyramb of astonishment and dismay.

II

As a débutante, under the protection of her aunt, Lady Otway, Bianca Rotheroyd had been a favorite in London society. The windows of her present hotel apartments commanded a fine view of Portland Place and the house where she was born, with the dim-greening, lacelike trees of Regent's Park for a background. She had lived there till she was twenty—till that day when, after a furious quarrel with Lady Otway, she had almost flung herself into a hansom and departed to begin her life on the stage.

The house was one of the largest in Portland Place, of a yellow-stucco, Georgian ugliness. Twenty times a day, viewing it, she felt thrills of happy recognition, memories of girlish experience, sad little regrets. Lady Otway was dead now; she had died while Bianca was away in America touring as a star. She had never been affectionate to her niece, but she had always been amusing. One of the proudest women in England, she was wont to say waspish things of people and to cherish opinions and prejudices that her niece could never be brought to share.

"Oh, I am only a knight's widow, if you please," she would say, "but my dear husband, remember, was a man in whose veins ran the blood of six eminent soldiers. I remember how we laughed when the Queen gave him only a knighthood after his greatest Indian battle. But everybody knows the jealousies and chicaneries of our army. He ought to have died an earl. Still, after all, what matter? I can afford to go in to dinner behind some upstart countess—it doesn't spoil my appetite in the least. Now there's my lovely young niece, Bianca. She'll never get a penny if she marries any man whom I disapprove, handle to his name or not. He must be well born, of course; he must be of her world, of her rank. But were he a triple duke instead of a double one, and not entirely clean-lived and reputable, I'd show him the door as quickly as if he were some greengrocer's clerk or even—well, even an *actor*!"

Lady Otway always pronounced that word with a stringent disrelish. She loathed the stage and rarely saw a play. She was not in the least sense religious; her abhorrence sprang from a fixed belief that women and men brought together before the footlights immediately put themselves outside the moral pale. It was useless to remind her that Mrs. This and Mr. That were intimate friends of the Duchess of A. and the Marchioness of B. "Even if Royalty should beam on them and invite them—" she once began, when somebody blandly interrupted: "Royalty *has* beamed and *has* invited."

The reminder served in no measure to placate her ladyship. When she brought out Bianca she drew sharp lines. It was said that she once narrowly escaped offending the Prince of Wales by not having, at one of her receptions, a certain pushy actress, greatly in vogue, whom he expected to see there. She was immensely rich, and Bianca, luxuriously *lancée*, became the belle of the season.

Bianca's passion for the stage had been ripening since she was fifteen,

and at this time she met a young barrister, Oliver Wraybourne, who read her a play in which she believed she could win a great success. Oliver was well born, ugly and angular, but with exquisite, shapely white hands that he sometimes used in the gesticulating manner of a Frenchman, and a pair of large, scintillant, green-gray eyes, brimful of perpetual fire. He was half in the upper bohemian set of London and half in the smartly exclusive. He had brought out one play, "The New Psyche," that had been admired by critics and ignored by publicans. It was at a great ball at Stafford House that Bianca had surprised him by the statement, as they chatted under a famous Vanddyke, that she had studied for the stage for almost three years, in the most surreptitious way, under Mrs. Barclay Boyd. The acquaintance with Wraybourne was formed at what seemed to her a most opportune time, for it was within a week after this conversation that she was impelled to flee from her Aunt Evelyn's wrath. It was then that Mrs. Boyd had taken her in, and all London rang with the announcement that she had bolted from Portland Place and was going on the stage. She was possessed of nine hundred pounds a year, willed her by her late parents, and this she could rely on for her needs.

Then had followed six months of intense study for the part of *Judith*, in that marvelous problem play which Oliver Wraybourne wrote, and which was presented at the Duke of Cambridge's Theatre. Hundreds were turned away before the curtain rose. Two of the boxes had been sold at fifty pounds apiece. The stalls were packed with critics and social leaders.

"Are you nervous?" Wraybourne had said to her as she was going on for her first entrance.

"I feel rather insane one minute and the next calm as stone," she answered.

He expressed his confidence in her, and it gave her strength. Then Gale, the manager, touched her arm and

said, "Now," and she had gone forward, firmly, coolly, to a distinct triumph.

The next day the most churlish newspaper wisecracks admitted that she could act; many declared that she could act magnificently. People poured in on her at Mrs. Barclay Boyd's, and she had been intoxicated with victory and vanity. The great, daring step had been taken, and she had not fallen; she had not even slipped. A number of the fashionables who had held aloof from her in former days flocked now to her side with profuse compliments and lavish smiles.

Among them was her cousin Cora. The two had gone into the gay world together. For an earl's daughter Lady Cora Vallance was very democratic. She hated the snobbery by which chance of birth had environed her, but to Bianca it seemed she had always lacked the courage for an open revolt against it. Her mother was a simpering, inane woman, the widow of the Earl of Arrowcroft, who would have given her the moon without a murmur. That morning she had overwhelmed Bianca with eulogies.

"But of course, Cora," the new star said, "you have some fault to find. What is it?"

Lady Cora hesitated. "Perhaps, Bianca," she finally ventured, "you may have shown too much emotional strength. But this may have been my jealousy."

"Jealousy!" laughed Bianca, "from you, Lady Cora Vallance! Your mother will leave you a great fortune. Aunt Evelyn will cut me off in her will, and cut me in another way as well if we should ever meet again. The career on which I have embarked is notoriously perilous; yours is secure from now till you die."

"It's humdrum dreariness, rather," was the reply. "That's what Oliver Wraybourne's play seemed to tell me last night. His mood must have been steeped in shadow when he wrote it, though he has made your part beam forth from it like a star. The critics are all hard on him, I see."

"Yes, respectfully hard," said Bianca, glancing at a mass of journals that inundated an armchair. "They carry a naked sword in one hand and a laurel crown in the other. I think the younger Dumas must have got a good deal of such praise. I am sure it will not disconcert Oliver. He has a tremendous faith in himself; he has immense nerve, but no nerves. That's the kind of genius that succeeds."

"Did you notice one marked similarity in all the criticisms?—that they all lauded your leading man?" asked Cora.

"Alan Crieff—yes. Was he so very good?"

"He was more; at times you felt he lifted his rôle out of the groove Wraybourne set for it. And his stage presence is so striking! Those Crieffs, mamma says, have been handsome men for generations. He comes from a long line of soldiers. What made him take to the buskin? *You*, people say."

There was that in her tone which gave a significance to her admission of jealousy, and which recalled to Bianca certain rumors she had heard of her cousin's sentiment for the handsome actor. But Bianca dismissed her suspicions with a laugh. "People will cackle," she replied. "He is not the least in love with me, nor am I with him. No; Alan Crieff is one of eight children; he had to do something, so he went to Gale, who instantly caught at the idea of a star, a leading man and a playwright all trailing in agreeable trinity on his boards the glories of Upper Tendom. But it wasn't quite expected," she went on, with a little smile, "that Alan would precisely eclipse me."

"He hasn't done anything of the sort," remonstrated Cora. "Now do be wise in time, my dear. Jealousy is the infirmity, you know, of great artists. *Don't* allow your manager to discharge Alan Crieff. At this stage of your achievement it would be the most imprudent step."

"I should never dream of being so selfish, my dear Cora," answered Bianca, frankly, and there the conversation had been interrupted.

III

SINCE then how much had happened! She had played on a long while in London, with *Judith* her only part. Then she had gone into the provinces, with large pecuniary results. By this time she felt herself a rich woman, with these new-made funds added to her original dower. Moreover, she now realized that in spite of whatever force and skill she might possess as an actress, a power of fascinating her audiences went with both. Even when she was tired and at odds with her art she felt the potency of this unexplainable spell. But fatigue was rare with her. She loved to play, and if there was any real weariness in her nightly routine it sprang from the continuous impersonation of a single character. She had studied seven or eight parts under Mrs. Boyd, and could have performed in any one of them at a few hours' notice. Once in Manchester, where the engagement had been lengthened to an unusual degree, she asked her manager if he would not put on "*Romeo and Juliet*" for at least three nights before their departure for Liverpool.

Gale gave a great start. "No, no," he answered; "don't think of it."

"But some day, you know, I *intend* to think of it."

"Oh, some day, of course. Some day you'll do *Beatrice* and *Viola* and lots of the 'legitimate.' But not while your *Judith* is such a money-maker. Besides, the public must have it stamped into them that you're a great actress. Always remember that every artist ministers to the whims of a huge baby, for that's precisely what the public is. We must not throw away this cigar till we've smoked it down. Then perhaps your 'legitimate' work may cause you pangs of disappointment. There is absolutely no prophesying that it won't. There's no prophesying anything whatever in this curious, erratic, zigzag profession. You may have to begin all over again—who can tell? You may be delicious in *Juliet* or *Rosalind*, and yet send the box-office receipts down so low that

there's merely a choice between ruin and a change of bill."

Here Gale, who was long, pale, flabby, with large features and a lower lip so loose that it looked at times like the puckered petal of a white poppy, slapped with one big-knuckled hand his fat thigh. "Now for another point," he pursued. "I've noticed, Bianca—"

"Miss Rotheroyd, if you please." The correction was given calmly but with stinging stress. Bianca permitted no managerial familiarities. Her ground was her ground, and she guarded it. Toward her company she bore herself the same. With some of its members, both men and women, she was glacial; with a few affable; with a very few sympathetic and on equal terms. Nevertheless, her methods were so free from the least open censure while thus sharply defining her position, that somehow she aroused no dislike whatever and gained a placid respect that amounted almost to real popularity. The more she saw of the stage the less she liked it. "If I ever lose my enthusiasm for the art itself," she would now and then meditate, "woe betide me! What I see and learn, and am shocked or grieved by, are things from which I am now capable of rebounding. To-day forgetfulness comes easily enough, and self-absorption as well. But to-morrow!—ah, who can say what nude ugliness may not stare at me then, when the charm of the ideal is lost in fatigue!"

Gale felt like snarling aloud at the snub, but dared not resent it. He was always a tyrant with his ordinary players; his face had been slapped more than once for his boorishness. Usually his players detested him as much as they admired his abilities to teach them. This he could almost magically do at rehearsals by little pungent murmurs, little pregnant hints. Through private interviews, also, he could accomplish even greater marvels. For this reason they often endured his impudence, his flaring temper, his heartless jeers.

But Bianca, partly, if by no means chiefly, because of her birth and high connections, vetoed this course from the start. The main reason of his deference to her, however, was her very palpable aid in filling his pockets. "Oh, she's great!" he would have told you. But "great," with him, had only a single sordid meaning.

"Excuse me—yes—Miss Rotheroyd—of course," he muttered now, loathing the unwonted apology; "fact is, you know, I see you called plain Bianca Rotheroyd so much in the newspapers—er—"

"You spoke of having noticed something—some 'other point,'" Bianca interrupted. "Does it refer to me?"

"No; to Alan Crieff. He's pushing you too hard. I don't like it. He almost seems trying to cut under you. It harms the perspective. He must get more into his proper background. He's got to stop it. Have you felt at all what I'm speaking of?"

Bianca laughed. "*Haven't* I? But please leave Alan alone. He's tremendously ambitious. Now and then he does make me a little nervous. But I don't want him to think me jealous, and I'm sure he will think so if he hears any complaint. Then, perhaps, he'll sulk; that is so like a man—to sulk. And he makes, as it is, an admirable support. You've just called the public a baby. Perhaps it is. Who knows what caprice it may vent on my *Judith* if Alan be withdrawn?"

But Gale did remonstrate with Alan Crieff, and the latter instantly threw up his part. With bleeding pride and a sense of outrage, he sought Bianca. She was so angry at Gale that she threatened to break her contract and let him do his worst. He scowled at her, but he dared not kill the goose with the golden eggs, and made his peace as best he could.

Crieff did not blame Bianca, and their fateful talk made them better friends than ever. She thought, once or twice, that he was on the verge of asking her to be his wife. But

greatly to her relief, he made no such proposal. Afterward, when they had parted the best of friends and he had gone back to London, Bianca told herself that his longing for histrionic distinction dominated all other emotions. Doubtless if he desired to marry any woman, that woman was herself. But she cared for him no more than for some hardy and beautiful plant, a vigorous and symmetric tree. He was a splendid fellow to look at; he was a gentleman, and all that; but he failed to stir her pulses in the vaguest way, even when she admitted that he had given her valued advice untarnished by flimsy compliment, or had shone before her at his conversational brightest.

She played *Judith* in Liverpool with somebody else in the *jeune premier* part, and felt very taxed and insecure during the whole of the first performance. But the next day all her criticisms were echoes of the past, and though Crieff's absence was not referred to, the new presence of Mr. Cobbe was scarcely mentioned.

"It's just as I told you," said Gale, several days later. "The box-office hasn't shown Crieff's departure by a penny of difference. That reminds me—I've a big cheque for you."

"Thanks."

"May I ask, without being called impertinent," the manager continued, "who takes charge of your money affairs nowadays?"

"Oh, a person whom I thoroughly trust," replied Bianca. She meant Oliver Wraybourne, who had written the play that brought her in such large sums. Oliver still practiced as a barrister, and, like few dramatists, had the coolest of heads for business. Bianca would sometimes smile over the intense punctilio with which he rendered her strict account of every deposit and investment.

"But it's all very well," she went on, "to say that poor Alan's withdrawal makes no pecuniary difference. It bothers *me* decidedly. This Mr. Cobbe, to put it plainly, Mr. Gale, is a stick."

"Of course he's a stick. He's al-

ways been one, and he's ten years older than he looks. But the audiences accept him. They don't see what you see—that he's hard and stiff to play with. He gets through all right; nobody ever thinks about him; he's neither good enough nor bad enough. He's just your proper foil. I hope he'll go with us on our American tour."

But Bianca had already made up her mind that he should do nothing of the sort. Once again in London, on the eve of sailing for the United States, she found Alan Crieff without an engagement. Half by maneuvering and half by an attitude of distinct though repressed command she induced Gale to write him, offering a resumption of his former engagement. And so, to her great satisfaction—since she felt that the old pleasure in her part would now return—she sailed away with Crieff on the same steamer.

But America, as not seldom happens in these dramatic undertakings, greeted the distinguished English star with an unforeseen novelty of acclaim. It conceded that Bianca was very astonishing, but it also paid to Alan Crieff a homage startlingly new. In New York he almost shared the popularity of Bianca. Both were socially courted, but Crieff, by his personal beauty, vivid love-making and melodious elocution, enraptured the "matinée girl" to a degree that often burdened him with embarrassments. To do Bianca full justice, it must be said of her that she never once, throughout their long tour from New York to San Francisco, betrayed a single jealous qualm. She did not seem even in the least perturbed when Gale gave evidence that he now held Crieff in much higher consideration than formerly, as an actor worth "handling" thereafter.

The news of his advancement soon drifted overseas. Letters came to Bianca full of questionings from her friends, and of admonitions also. "Can it possibly be true that he has eclipsed you over there?" wrote Lady Cora. "Don't let him take the wind

out of your sails, my dear," warned Mrs. Barclay Boyd. "I know your generous nature, but there are times when to efface one's self would be sheerest madness."

In Chicago Gale surprised Bianca by proposing to give three extra matinée performances of "Romeo and Juliet." She acquiesced, knowing perfectly well her manager's motive. She had a good deal of confidence in her ability to play *Juliet*. Besides, the prospect of an artistic contest with Crieff fired her blood. They were still on the most amicable terms. He came to her with luminous looks of gratitude.

"You're giving me such a glorious chance, Bianca," he said.

"What about myself?" she retorted, laughing. "Do you suppose I haven't any personal motives?"

"You may have—why not? But then you couldn't be selfish if you tried. And your word is law with Gale. You could easily get another *Romeo*, provided you felt so disposed."

Bianca watched him. He was certainly a very handsome young man. She wondered if his passion for renown had really begun to work in him sterilizing, desiccating effects.

The first afternoon performance was given, and Bianca distinctly failed in *Juliet*. She attempted no protest whatever against misjudgment and prejudice on the part of her critics. She was indeed her own worst critic, and declared that the Chicago journalists had let her down very easily.

To Gale, as to Crieff, she made the same mournful confession. "I believed that I could speak those adorable lines with great strength and freshness. I believed that I could win the hearts of my hearers and hold them as I had never done before. But during the balcony scene I first began to feel a cold, incapacitating self-distrust. I could not explain my own ineffectual effort. It was like trying to make music from a broken lute."

Meanwhile the *Romeo* of Crieff had been lauded as clever and even sub-

lime. "I felt all the time," Bianca told him, "that you were playing far above me." She gave him her hand in frank congratulation. "You've won this time, and I'll try to beat you somewhere else—say as *Beatrice* to your *Benedick*."

In San Francisco they announced a series of three more extra matinées, the play being "Much Ado About Nothing." Bianca's welcome as *Judith* had proved notably ardent. She had been cheered at the first performance, and the audience demanded curtain after curtain at the end of the thrilling third act. She felt encouraged as to *Beatrice*, and the wound of *Juliet* had ceased to bleed.

It must be granted that she accomplished this delicate and silvery masterpiece of feminine comedy with grace and finish. But before the play ended she admitted to Gale that much of its elfin loveliness had eluded her. To Crieff, that same night, she said:

"You have won more laurels. You are a born *Benedick*."

He smiled. "But I'm not a *Benedick* yet, Bianca." Then suddenly, with deepening voice: "You could make me one. Won't you?"

She looked him full in the eyes and slowly shook her head. "You don't find your *Beatrice* in me," was her answer. "I doubt, somehow, if you will ever find her. For myself, candidly, I do not care about you that way, Alan. And you only ask me because——"

"Because?" he queried, curt and haughty, as she hesitated.

"Oh, never mind. But I know; and I think you know even better than I do."

She meant that he wanted to marry her because she was now rich and could aid him in his future career, partly through her wealth and partly through her fame, which he might sooner or later outrival and overshadow.

There were times when she repented this estimate as an injustice. But she never apologized for her momentous hint. Her woman's clairvoyance kept assuring her that he did not love

her, and hence his proffer seemed unpardonably false, even though in other ways she might have suspected him too harshly.

They arrived at no positive quarrel, however, and on their return to England were still good enough friends for him to include himself among those who gathered in her apartments on the afternoon when she startled all by the announcement of her retirement from the stage.

IV

By ones and twos her guests departed, each with some remonstrance against her decision, to which she replied amiably, but with an air of reserve and finality that appeared to forbid public questioning. Gale was pale, and his manner, as he put out his big, limp hand in adieu, indicated that, so far as he was concerned, the matter was by no means settled—that it was only deferred to a more propitious opportunity for argument. Between Lady Cora Vallance and Crieff there passed a significant look as if the two understood the secret of the whole matter, and they took their leave in company.

Oliver Wraybourne alone remained.

Bianca was a little startled when he rose from his seat in a shadowy corner and advanced to meet her as she returned from speeding a parting guest. Then she impulsively gave him her hand.

"I'm so glad you've stayed on," she said.

It was pleasant to be with dear old Oliver again. How manful his irregular face looked, how full of latent force and solid dignity! And those magnetic eyes—where in her wanderings had she seen such mobile pupils, lucid signals of the restless and powerful intellect that lay beyond them?

"I surprised you a little, did I?" he said, as they sank into chairs that were somewhat close together. "Well, a little while ago, when you

delivered your ultimatum, you startled me almost out of my wits. So we're even."

"I intended to write to you, Oliver," she answered, half-apologetically.

"But you preferred to announce it in oratoric solemnity, with a platform demeanor."

"Don't satirize me," she pleaded.

"Oh, you did that yourself." His next words were sneered. "Pray, did Gale tell you that you couldn't play Shakespeare?"

Her dark eyes drooped; she was embarrassed before his arraigning look, and she never seemed lovelier to him than when she was embarrassed. "Gale doesn't think I can."

"Gale is so avaricious that I sometimes wonder at his honesty. To say that he isn't clever would be absurd. But he is also immeasurably coarse. He can put on a Drury Lane melodrama superbly, but I am confident that he would like to exert his terrible cleverness, if only he dared, on the great masterpieces. His passion for 'managing' would not stop, if he had his way, at any bound of reverence. He thinks gallery, he feels gallery, and nothing more. And I suppose he saw that the gallery didn't take to your *Juliet*."

"No portion of the house took to it," said Bianca, with rueful candor.

Oliver's face was now animated as she best loved to see it. He grew handsome—rather, he made one forget that he wasn't handsome. The quick, facile gestures of his hands, while he had spoken on, almost brought the tears to her eyes; they reminded her so of the days when they used to talk of the drama together at balls or teas, during walks in the Park, perhaps during the games at Ranelagh or Hurlingham. It was he, with his ardent allegiance to the drama and his eloquent revelations of its finest meanings, who at last had set the seal on her resolve to become an actress.

"No portion of the house took to it?" he repeated, with another sneer, directed again, as she well knew, at

Gale. "Was not the whole get-up a rather forlorn one, off there in a foreign town and at probably brief notice?"

"It was surely second-rate," she assented. "And I myself, it must be owned, felt unstrung. You had just written me of my aunt's death——"

"I see. An ice-bound old snob, who cut you off without a penny——"

"Don't, please, Oliver!"

"—and yet her death, because of youthful associations, brought you a shock. I can see the unworthy surroundings, the ill-qualified support. Who was the *Nurse*? Old Mrs. Holcombe? Yes? How dreadful! As easy to play with a trained seal who had developed a voice and went pottering about on its tail. Was Alan Crieff a really good *Romeo*?"

"I couldn't tell. He seemed to be, and everybody thought him so."

"H'm! He's always good — by which I mean that he's never super-excellent. He's all schooling and talent; he hasn't a scintilla of genius. But never mind him. You wrote me, Bianca, that you could never care for him enough to be his wife—and I believe you. I somehow read between your lines that he'd asked you to marry him. And if so, why not? It's just like him. A charming life he'd have led you as Mrs. Crieff! I know the fellow so well! He inspires love in many women, but he never has once returned it, and never will. Doubtless he'll marry, some day, for pure ambition. If you had taken him and played with him he would have used you as a ladder. In every part that he played with you he would have done his best to outshine you. And your love—provided you had it—would have made you yield, yield, till finally you were his living background, against which he beamed out in all his coveted splendor. Then, after you'd served his purpose, he would have neglected you, flung you aside, been daringly unfaithful. For he's the worst kind of an intrigant at heart—the cold and deliberate kind."

"But nothing could ever have in-

duced me to marry him," Bianca cried, on the verge of anger. "I saw; I observed; I know his nature as well as you know it. Things happened in America . . . A moment ago, Oliver, you said never mind him, and then you rush on in a torrent of dispraise."

Oliver shuddered and for an instant covered his face. "Oh, Bianca, you don't know what I've suffered while you were away!"

"How sweet of you!" she could not help responding.

"No wonder they've driven you into fancying you must leave the stage."

"Fancying?"

"Yes. That company! Gale's moral life!"

"Hush — hush! He never presumed to let me catch the least glimpse of it."

"But you guessed; you couldn't help guessing. And three or four of those women who went with you! I ground my teeth as I saw you off that day on the steamer from Southampton. No wonder, too, that the whole horrid *entourage* has made you imagine you can't play Shakespeare. Why, my dear Bianca, what idiocy! *Juliet, Beatrice, Viola, Rosalind, Portia*—I can see you in all as clearly as I can see Regent's Park from yonder window."

"Then you—really—think—?" she faltered, stopping short.

"You have every possible equipment for those characters. They await you like loose-hanging garments. The stretch of a pair of arms into this or that pair of arm-holes, the drooping and disposition of certain draperies, the proper preparation, the proper suggestions, directions, and above all, the proper sympathetic environment, encouragement, stimulus, would dissipate all your self-distrust."

Bianca heard him with quickened pulses. "Oh, Oliver, I can't forget how you told me I would succeed in *Judith*, and how I obeyed you, not Gale, in every prompting."

"To the devil with Gale!" retorted

Oliver. "He's no fit manager for you."

"Ah, who is?"

"I."

After he had spoken that one short word in somber staccato, they looked at each other for some time in silence.

Bianca spoke first. "But you're not a manager—you've your own affairs with the courts, as a barrister. You couldn't give those up."

"I *would* give them up—for you."

She understood him. But he sat quite quiescent, now, with not an affectionate intimation in his bearing.

"For me?" she breathed.

He rose and stood beside her, one tense-knotted hand laid on the near table where a chaos of teacups glimmered, and the other waving to and fro with vehemence.

"I would give up everything for you, Bianca," he said. "You might marry a man whom you loved more—a man whom you really loved, I mean—but you could never marry one who would serve you so perfectly in the career to which you were born. I would watch you and guard you in the full accomplishment of your genius. I know it in all its moods of timidity, boldness, inspiration, depression. I know it as if it were a house of which I had been caretaker for years—every coign and cranny of it, every covert stairway, every furtive room. And I believe that in the end your heart would respond; I believe—"

"Oh, it does now, Oliver!" she broke out, but he instantly caught in her tones the nature of this reply, and slowly bowed his head while she proceeded. "If I ever married anyone it would be you. I have so constantly thought of your devotion all the time I was away—of the immense chance you gave me in *Judith*—of your vigilant money dealings with Gale and your careful investments, which you detailed again and again, so that I, the merest infant in matters of finance, could not fail to understand. I love you almost measurelessly as a

friend—as a friend, dear Oliver, beyond price. And yet—"

She paused, and he saw her tears gather while she half turned away.

He himself wholly turned away, then. He caught up his hat and umbrella from a nook not far off, and passed toward the door. Stopping there he said, a little gruffly, glancing at his watch:

"I'm engaged at half after seven to dine with the stupidest woman in London. At least she'll appear so, now that I've seen you once again. Good-bye till to-morrow, when, I think, we are both to dine with your cousin, Lady Cora. But remember this—you *can* play Shakespeare, and you must not dream of leaving the stage."

Before she could answer he was gone. She sat down and quietly cried for at least ten minutes. "I do love him, I do love him!" her thoughts ran. "He never seemed so near me as of late. Off there in America, especially toward the last, I felt myself needing him—at times, very deeply. Why, then, do I shrink from marrying him? Why does it all appear so unromantic, so unpalatable? There were moments, just now, when I felt myself on the verge of saying: 'Yes, Oliver, I will be your wife!' What restrained me? Why did I hesitate?"

She began to pace the floor, trying to think it out, with a hand pressed against either temple, where the crinkled gold of her hair made little rebels of curls. And suddenly, then, it all grew clear. Oliver wished her to continue on the stage. If she became his wife that would naturally follow. And she did not want the stage any longer. Its illusions had perished. She perceived now, as never before, that her failure in Shakespeare had not lain at the root of this aversion. There had been something else—a slow, erosive repulsion and disgust. It was the feeling that Fanny Kemble tells us about in her memoirs—the sense of trading on one's emotions, of flaunting them, naked and ashamed, before hundreds

of studious, irreverent eyes. It was repulsion, too, like that which visited the brilliant and lovely Mary Anderson in the zenith of her fame and money-winning. Dramatic art was high enough, inspiring enough, when you once grappled with it behind the footlights; but the paths that led there, vulgar, tedious, repellent, sometimes malodorous besides—these it had grown, at certain less tolerant intervals, almost a torment to traverse.

When her next chance came she would tell all this to Oliver. He could have her for his wife if he would acquiesce in her determination to leave the stage forever. She would watch with delight his career as a maker of plays. He, in turn, would hearken to her occasional counselings, and bask in her brightest smiles when he made great hits, while sure of her infinite sympathy if he were ever so unfortunate as to fail.

Bianca was fairly quivering with excitement when she reached this definite plan of action. She longed to write Oliver, yet dismissed the desire as over-bold. To-morrow night they would meet at her cousin's; he would go home with her in the cab, and then, or later on, she could make all clear to him.

"It will be a severe love-test," she thought, remembering the picture he had painted of a mutual future so radically different.

That evening she dined quietly in her own apartments. The next day a new host of callers came, and while she was chatting with them and being welcomed by them, Leith Osmond appeared.

Three or four of Osmond's plays had been produced in London, and each had narrowly escaped success. All had been pronounced excellent specimens of stagecraft, while lacking in importance of subject. "Give me an idea," he was wont to say, "and I'll astound everybody by the manner in which I manipulate it, in which I bring out its lights and shades. I surpass Oliver Wraybourne, as it is, at mere technique.

What I crave is my intellectual and dramatic message. But somehow, in all its desired originality and freshness, I can never induce it to come." And people used to assert, meantime, that Leith Osmond's big ears, bent forward like twin sounding boards, were forever waiting to catch it.

"I'm so very sorry there's such a crowd," he said to her, in stolen tête-à-tête. "You distressed me so, yesterday, that I wanted to tell you—idly and perhaps impertinently—of how you had made me suffer."

"Suffer?"

"Yes. For it's been my dream to give you a play that you would like and do."

"Ah," smiled Bianca, "and yet you once told me——"

"I know," Osmond broke in. "I told you that I wanted some great idea. But I felt certain that somehow you had brought back more than one from America. Of course, there is Oliver Wraybourne. He gave you *Judith*, and would have had the preference. There might be two, I kept telling myself. Well, I would have taken, in that case, second place." The expressive ears never had a more listening look. "And I can't help hoping yet."

"I see," said Bianca. "You mean that I may retract my determination to quit the stage."

Osmond nodded. "Look at Patti. She's always bidding good-bye to her audiences—or was. And with so many others it is the same. You'll repent!" He scanned her features with doubtful yet imploring gaze. "It's only a whim, and when it has passed you won't forget me."

"It will not pass," replied Bianca. "But if it ever should——"

"Well, then?" Osmond eagerly caught her up.

"—I'd have no idea to give you," she ended, "for I've not brought back the ghost of one. Really, I have not!"

"Ah!" he cried, with a despair not wholly comic; and just then the large figure of Mrs. Barclay Boyd drew up to Bianca's side.

"My dear," said the newcomer, with her face full of melancholy—a face that, despite wrinkles and crow's feet, still retained traces of former beauty—"I truly didn't sleep all night, thinking of your dreadful resolution."

"You must not call it dreadful," returned Bianca, pressing the hand of her old teacher, whom she dearly loved.

"Oh, but it is," wailed Mrs. Boyd. She glanced nervously about her. "I didn't expect this great gathering. But what does it mean? Your fame, your splendid fame, which you are now going to cast under foot! And people are saying such odd things." Here the lady paused.

"Well," urged Bianca, "what are people saying?"

"That you have thrown everything over for Alan Crieff. That you were rivals, but are now engaged. That he has bewitched you into marrying him, and that with your money he will star, using the reputation he has already achieved through your aid."

Bianca threw back her head with the heartiest of laughs. "Contradict it, dear friend," she exclaimed. "Pray sow your contradictions broadcast, for it's the absurdest of falsehoods."

V

At her cousin's dinner that evening she repeated, with buoyant levity, Mrs. Boyd's words. To her surprise, Lady Cora perceptibly reddened, and then gave her head a light, irritated toss.

"Isn't it silly of people," she exclaimed, with visible heat, "to spread those tiresome reports!"

"So silly," cooed her mother, the Countess of Arrowcroft.

Nearly everything that her daughter said Lady Arrowcroft epitomized in drowsy eulogy after this fashion. She was a very stout old lady, with a sweet face that looked nowadays quite too small for her body. She fell into little dozes occasionally, and not seldom at the most inopportune

moments. Because of these failings Lady Cora seldom gave large dinners, and when she did, "mamma's" absence was apologized for as due to "temporary illness." To-night Lady Cora did not care if the abnormal doze arrived or not; her only guests were Bianca and Oliver Wraybourne, who both knew very well her mother's oddities.

The house in Upper Brook street, where for several generations the Arrowcroft family had lived, was not large, yet was filled with numberless precious heirlooms. Till within the last decade its interior had been stiff and awkward, but Lady Cora's modernizing touches of taste were now everywhere visible. The dining-room, with its candle-lit table glimmering from a dusk in which you espied shadowy portraits by Lawrence or Reynolds, was almost perfect in its way.

In nothing did Lady Cora quite attain perfection. Personally she lacked just the finishing quality of each attribute. She played almost well; she sang admirably, but never excellently; her French was fluent, but not of the true Parisian timbre; she wrote verses that were constant echoes of the greater bards; her little water-colors were so clever that one deplored their incessant discords in composition. Physically, too, she was a living emblem of the "all-but," the *manqué*. Her type would have been that of the delicious Fra Angelico maiden had it not been for a certain drab tint that entangled itself in the curly gold of her hair. Her mouth would have been a Cupid's bow if it had turned up the faintest bit more at either corner. Her face would have had the perfect shape of a heart if it had not flattened so fatally just where the chin should have been pointed. Destiny, with malicious chisel, had refrained from a clean, downward stroke at either jaw, and dealt a spoiling one just below. And then, as to her eyes, if their blue had been only a little more limpid, and their contour a trifle more almond-like!

Bianca changed the subject to one more agreeable, for the purpose of making her cousin forget whatever annoyance her gay speech had caused. The girl's mind was full of doubt and worriment regarding her proposed compact with Oliver, and she did not, on this account, care to ask of Lady Cora why she had so vehemently spoken. Besides, did she not know that between Alan Crieff and her cousin there had long existed an intimacy bordering on friendship? Had it been resumed during this brief time since his return? What more probable? She herself now knew Crieff so well! And Cora seemed wearier than ever of her surroundings. What a feather in Crieff's cap if he won for a wife the daughter of Lady Arrowcroft! Would it not be just like him to level the full forces of his physical attractions on a young woman so susceptible to such tender assault? In her heart Bianca was very fond of Cora, and it shot through her with the sting of a dart that such a marriage, if fate enforced it, would bring only misery in its wake.

Oliver Wraybourne joined in Bianca's spirited conversation. But he soon glanced toward a vacant chair at Lady Cora's side, and lightly asked of her:

"Still, why this blot on our pleasant feast? Was Crieff expected, and is it because he hasn't turned up that you flew to arms at Bianca's jocose anecdote?"

"I—I didn't fly to arms," Lady Cora denied, palpably crestfallen.

"Oho! Didn't you?" said Oliver, quizzically. "Since when, pray, have you become Crieff's devout defender?"

"I've always liked him, and it seemed such a cruel thing to say of him that he'd drive Bianca off the stage for his own selfish purposes."

"But *I* didn't say it," said Bianca. "I merely repeated it as something nonsensical that people were babbling."

"His enemies," Lady Cora replied. "It must be only they. I fancy he has lots. All handsome and successful men have, especially actors."

"Yes," fluted Lady Arrowcroft, "especially actors."

Lady Cora chose to wave aside the whole subject. "This empty chair," she said, "was intended for a good friend of mine, and the brother of a better friend still. I mean Eric Ingram."

"He's a dear," said Bianca, while Wraybourne gave an approving nod. "I long to see him again. He must have a lot more of those witty stories since I met him last. And his sister, Isabel, is ever so nice, too. We were always chums. I thought she'd be among those who first came to greet me."

"Greet you!" sighed Lady Cora. "My dear, you haven't heard. Poor Isabel has grown a perfect wreck. It's nervous exhaustion. She had a very bad attack this afternoon. I sat with her for nearly an hour. Eric was there. He told me it was doubtful if he could come this evening. Ah!" She took a note from the salver a footman just then presented. "Pardon me; it's in Eric's handwriting." She broke the seal and rapidly read the lines. "Dear, dear!"

"What is it?" asked Bianca and Wraybourne in a breath.

"Eric begs me to come there this evening, if only for a few minutes. His sister is worse and wishes to see me. It's a return of her strange hysteria, he says, and no one seems to have so calming an effect on her as I."

"You mustn't go yet," said Bianca. "You must dine first. Is he very urgent?"

"He wants me to come within the next hour at latest," replied Lady Cora. "I know you'll excuse me," she went on. "I'm not in the least sure that I can do poor Isabel any good whatever, but it somehow seems a duty that I ought not to shirk."

"A duty, you know," suavely echoed her mother, addressing both guests, "that my daughter really ought *not* to shirk."

And so it happened that Lady Cora went away in her carriage just as dessert was being served. "I may not remain absent more than a half-

hour," she said, while quitting the table. "It's quite too unfortunate, isn't it? *Au revoir*. Don't dream of going, either of you, till I return."

Soon after she had disappeared Bianca whispered to Oliver over their coffee: "See, Aunt Cynthia's fallen into one of her dozes." And presently, at a probable summons from one of the footmen, an elderly maid came and led Lady Arrowcroft, nodding and smiling and murmuring dulcet little nothings, from the apartment.

Then Bianca and Oliver went upstairs into one of the delightful drawing-rooms. For some little time they sat near each other without speaking. Heavy curtains, of a mediæval arras-like pattern, were drawn both behind and in front of them, thus keeping out a somewhat formidable draught.

At length Oliver punctured the silence with a commonplace, and she answered it with another.

"You never smoke," she said. "It seems odd."

He smiled. "Why?"

"Nearly all men do."

"Often to their cost—yes."

"They don't think of that. They're more reckless than you. You're cautious about many things, are you not? I suppose it comes from being a bar-rister."

She had just told herself that she was talking rather inanely at random, when he took her up in sharp tones.

"Was I cautious last night?"

"Last night?" she faltered.

"When I asked you to marry me and got your downright no?"

After a slight silence Bianca said: "Was it so very downright?"

He started, turning full toward her. "You'll grant that you refused me?"

"Oh, yes. But you demanded so much."

He started again. "Demanded so much? I?"

"Certainly. You made a most stringent proviso. I must return to the stage."

"Did you mean, then—?" The question seemed to shatter itself as it

burst from his lips. He caught one of her hands and kissed it. "Ah, but, Bianca, the stage is your vocation, your duty. Possessing genius, my dear girl, you are necessarily one in a million, for genius is a word used too often with terrible disregard of truth. Your renunciation is a literal sacrilege."

"Say an infinite relief."

"Ah, you must take the bitter with the sweet. What triumphs in any art were ever led to by a royal road?"

"But I've grown indifferent to all triumphs," declared Bianca.

"Ah, that is because you are tired. You need a long rest. Be married to me quite quietly and you shall take one in some tranquil Swiss or Tyrolean place. Afterward——"

Bianca cut him short with a little laugh of mockery.

"And afterward will come your strenuous persuasions that I should go back to the loud theatric life."

Again he kissed her hand. "You shall not go back to it unless you so desire."

"Oh, of course you can't compel me; I realize that. But you won't be happy in writing your plays with a view to having other women act in their chief rôles. You won't be happy unless you have satisfied yourself whether I can or cannot do Shakespeare's heroines to thronged houses." A spell of forlorn prophecy had crept into her tones. "Oh, it's all so clear just what would happen! I could foresee much contentment in sympathy with your work, in suggestions here and fault-findings there, all of which you might loftily frown down, while I laughed at my own audacity and made you join in the laugh as well. But no; forever you would be hinting of how I might excel here and shine there. Oliver, believe me, what I would desire is a home. Actresses have no homes."

"True," he said, and sat for a while thinking, with eyes riveted on the floor.

"Perhaps," Bianca pursued, "you might have done something as good as 'Judith.' I believe, for my own

part, you will one day do something better. Well, in that case I can hear you saying: 'Bianca, *will* you refuse to create this character? Consent, and *vous me rendrez la vie*.' Then perhaps you would read me the play, Oliver, and that temptation which I no longer feel would again pull at my heart-strings. For the play, as I said, might be very fine, and I might see myself in it as in a mirror, and be lured, lured against my will, to resume what you have so flatteringly called my vocation and my duty."

Oliver quite suddenly threw back his head and stared at the shadowy ceiling. "So you think, Bianca, I would carry a card up my sleeve like that? No. It will be an honest game with me or none. You speak of temptation. I'll give you now the greatest one you could ever have as my wife. For I shall let you hear the best play that I shall ever write. It's immeasurably above 'Judith;' you will listen to it and judge it. Surely you'll admit that this is fair dealing. If you refuse to appear in it I shall bow to your resolve about leaving the stage. We can then be married, if you'll take me, and I, too, shall leave the stage. That is, I shall bring out this play, but never write another. I'll remain simply a barrister; and my practice, as you know, is not small."

"You to leave the stage, Oliver?" she returned, with quick negative head-shakes. "Ah, no! That would be tragic!"

"No more than for you."

"But you love to write."

"I love you better than the writing of a new 'Hamlet,' if I could compass one."

"But I should be spoiling your career by marrying you on such terms."

"If you didn't marry me at all you would be spoiling my life."

Bianca gave a great, bewildered sigh. "This is neither the time nor the place to read a long play. Have you it here?"

Oliver tapped his forehead. "I have it *here*."

"Oh, it's unwritten, then?"

"Partly. My first act hasn't been touched. My second is nearly all written. My third is entirely done. My fourth and last I could put on paper in two hours."

"That is the way you first spoke of 'Judith.' I recollect so well. Before you had by any means finished with it I learned from you the complete story."

"Yes," he said. "At the oddest times, when I'm immersed in the driest occupations, little links add themselves to the chain. Still, in this case it is different. There are details to be managed, of course. But the central idea dominates everything. Will you let me tell it to you?"

"By all means, if you will."

He rose and began to move about the chamber. It was the queerest sort of roaming. He stood still here, he accelerated his pace there. Now he addressed one of the dim pictures on the wall, again he took up an ornament from one of the tables and fingered it either with languor or speed. This went on for a full quarter of an hour, and always he spoke with the same harmony, naturalness and vigor. At times he gesticulated in his familiar way. Finally his voice fell into silence, and he reseated himself beside Bianca.

"Do you like it?" he asked.

"Do I like it! Oh, Oliver, Oliver!"

She hid her face in both hands.

"That idea—that wonderful idea!"

She was now staring at him with her dark eyes lambent and her lips tremulous. "Its originality is dazzling."

"I thought you'd care for it," he said, in a low voice.

"Care for it! There was never anything like it! I sha'n't sleep, or if I do, I shall dream of it all night."

He laid a hand on her arm. "One thing, Bianca. I forgot to ask it of you before. Promise me that you will never tell it to a living soul. Give me your sacred promise."

"I give you my sacred promise," she said. And their hands met, in memorable pressure.

But her enthusiasm would not cool.

"The wonderful idea, the wonderful idea!" she kept repeating. "And there's nothing *risqué* in it, as there was in 'Judith.' By what name will you call it?"

"My up-to-date decision is 'He and She.' Do you care for that name?"

She weighed his answer with golden head slanted sideways. "It's rather colorless, but it somehow fits like a glove. And, Oliver!"

"Well?"

"In one way it resembles 'Judith.' The man's part is almost as good as the woman's."

"Do you think of that because you want to play the woman's part?"

"No, no," she said, with vehemence. Then the blood rushed to her cheeks, and she tapped the floor almost violently with one restless foot. "How my words come true, and far sooner than I expected! You have already tempted me with your idea, your astonishing, unprecedented idea!"

She rose then, and so unsteadily that he caught her in both arms.

"Bianca! You're faint?"

"Yes—no." She recovered herself with an effort, and stood before him smiling, gently pushing him away.

"I'm all right, Oliver. Your play is magnificent."

"But I haven't tempted you with it," he protested.

She suddenly caught his hand. "I want to play it!"

"As my wife?" he asked, quite softly.

"No."

"No?"

She met his eyes, gazing into them as she spoke on. "I said that I wanted to play it. The effect it has had on me is indescribable. Do you know how it has made me feel?"

"I can't know till you tell me, Bianca."

"Well, it has made me feel this way: That I would like to use it as a farewell, a palpable and telling farewell, to the stage. I know that I could do it notably, perhaps very

brilliantly. It is all I; it is I from start to finish. But afterward, Oliver, and only afterward, I would be yours."

For several minutes he did not answer. "Well, agreed," he at length brought out. "In the Autumn you shall have your theatre, your selected company; I will arrange everything." He turned away, and she had already perceived that there were tears in his voice.

She watched him furtively. Then, going close to him, she said: "You don't understand. I will not marry you while I still remain an actress. I—I had never intended to marry at all—how often have I told you that! You must remember. But now——"

He veered toward her, with a wrecked, conciliating look. "Well, then, Bianca, give it all up! I could not help letting you hear! But now somebody else can play the part. *Soit*, as the French have it. We'll be married, go abroad, and——"

"No, no!" She shrank from his opening arms. "I must play it, I must! The wonderful idea! It has caught me in meshes that I can't tear off!"

Just then a voice came to them from without. It was Lady Cora's. She was evidently ascending into the upper hall.

"Tell James to wait with the coupé, Hutchins. Miss Rotheroyd may need it."

A rustle of robes drew nearer. The front tapestries were drawn apart, and Lady Cora, with a light evening cloak flung over one arm, swept into the room.

"I'm so sorry to have stayed away such an age. But Isabel was so ill, and the doctor said that if I would sit beside her and hold her hand the sleeping potion he had given her might take much quicker effect. Poor girl, they say she's in no danger, and that it's all nerves. But still her sufferings are intense." Here Lady Cora widened her eyes and looked with playful astonishment into the faces of her guests. "Well,

speaking of nerves, you two have both a rather excited air. What's happened? A quarrel or an engagement?"

"Neither," said Bianca. "While you've been absent Oliver's told me of a new play that he has in preparation."

"Really!" exclaimed Lady Cora. "Is it as good as 'Judith?'"

"Better, I think," answered Bianca.

"Dear, dear! What a treat I've missed!"

VI

No sooner was Lady Cora alone that evening than her face lost every sprightly sign, and an inward trembling seized her. She had never been a girl of scrupulous conscience, but thus far her treacheries had remained few and seldom serious, her lies grayish at their worst, and usually white. Now she felt that she had done a most odious thing, and the meanness of it so haunted her with self-disgust that she dreaded laying her head on its pillow, lest little remorseful imps, housing themselves there, should prevail in the banishment of all repose. Still, she presently fell asleep. For everything about her, it will be remembered, was partial rather than complete, and she represented one of nature's imperfect achievements. She had missed the higher morality, as she had missed all other superior gifts. Nevertheless, on waking the next day, she felt the old penitent ache recommence.

Her act had surely been of the shabbiest, and she was now in possession of a secret that she had no honest right to have learned. Last night she had come home from the Ingrams a full hour earlier than Bianca and Oliver believed. Thinking of her cousin's return to her apartments, she had told the coachman to bring back the carriage within an hour. Afterward, when they heard her loud-spoken words in the hall, she had really been for a long time in

the house. These words were seemingly addressed to a manservant named Hutchins, though she felt safe enough in taking for granted that Hutchins was below stairs, and quite beyond reach of any summons but that of a bell-peal.

What Lady Cora had done after crossing her mother's threshold was this: She had ascended into the rear drawing-room of a series of three. There, behind the copious folds of tapestry that divided it from the next room, she had heard voices easily audible.

At first she had no intention of listening. But certain sharply exchanged words clutched her attention as if they had been a hand at her throat. Presently she had heard more, and then a sense of dishonesty and self-soilure battled with the raw vulgarity of curiosity. She had been bred a lady; she recoiled several paces. Her hands, for a second, were lifted to her ears, as if to stop them from catching another syllable. Then the thought swept through her mind that they would probably soon mention Alan Crieff's name. And she was keenly interested in Alan Crieff. He had always fascinated her; but now, meeting him after protracted separation, she had felt the old chord of charm strengthen and tighten. If they had anything to say of him, of his life during that long professional companionship with her cousin, she must hear it—she absolutely must.

On this point nothing reached her. But so acute was the interest soon aroused that when their duologue ended and Oliver's recital began she went on drinking in eagerly every sentence that ensued.

At last she slipped down-stairs and shot a glance from the dining-room window to assure herself that the vehicle had come back and was waiting outside. Then she made her presence known to her guests in a spirit of rather valiant self-command, considering that she covertly pulsated all the time with qualms of a criminal shame.

Next morning she had hardly eaten

her breakfast when a desire beset her to go and see Bianca and make as clean a breast of it all as contrition could impose. But even if it were true that we are the masters rather than the slaves of fate, Lady Cora would now have had a hard tussle in order to keep herself ruler of her own moral impulse.

From Upper Brook street to Portland Place is not a long walk for any vigorous young English girl, no matter what route she decides on; and Lady Cora, because of the fresh, sunshiny morning, chose to take the Park as far as the Marble Arch, thence having determined on quiet old Wigmore street, which she meant to gain through Great Cumberland Place. But scarcely five minutes after entering the Park she came face to face with Alan Crieff.

They shook hands. It seemed to her that his beauty stood the glare of the day almost too impeccably. She had seen men of the Latin races whom she had thought so handsome that they were vulgar. This, to her British eyes, may have been usually explained by some flare of necktie, some *décolleté* effect about the throat, some bohemian trespass against conventional tailoring. But Crieff wore the garb of his race and clime with an ease unmarred by foppery. It encased his statuesque leanness with nicest result, and emphasized him as the typical, well-dressed Englishman, quite apart from his almost sensational good looks.

"Do I appear," he said, while he gave Lady Cora's palm a lingering clasp that she permitted blandly, "like a man who has just been confronted by an infuriate tiger?"

"Have you spent your morning at the Zoo?" asked Lady Cora.

"No; there they keep such specimens properly caged. I'm referring to Gale."

"In spite of the merry weather," said Lady Cora, "it's rather cold to sit down. Besides, all the chairs are a good way off. Won't you come home with me and lunch?"

"Thanks, if you'll let me," he

smiled. While she retraced her steps, walking slowly beside him, it occurred to her that a few more hours' delay of her confession to Bianca would not matter.

"I suppose you mean," she said, "that Gale is fuming over my cousin's retirement from the stage."

"Fuming is no word. He pours on her accusations of the grossest treachery."

"And what," his companion asked, with a sudden divagation that surprised him, "are Gale's wishes or plans regarding your future?"

Crieff's face dismally clouded. "He tells me that he has now no use for me."

"And yet I had somehow fancied he had got to rank you high in Shakespearean parts."

Crieff gave a somber shrug. "If Bianca had not made her dumfounding announcement he might have done 'Romeo and Juliet' here. But without her—never!"

"Yet she failed——"

"But not in London. And I am not famous here, as you know. Moreover, as you also know, the Londoners will not listen to Shakespeare nowadays unless he is done with great, expensive, spectacular mounting, as Irving does him, or Beerbohm Tree."

Crieff's melancholy note continued after they had reached Lady Cora's home. She loved to hear him talk about himself—a pleasure in which he shared—and she soon found herself participating in his resentment against Bianca for having, as he phrased it, so cruelly chucked him over.

"You feel, then," she said, as they sat side by side waiting for lunch to be announced, "that your immediate future projects are harmed?"

"Harmed? They are ruined!"

"Has Gale no idea of keeping you for some new performance during the season?"

"Gale has no plans. I suspect there is no reason why he should specially have them. The American tour must have brought him a lot of

money. All I know is this—he says he has been crushed, paralyzed, by Bianca's behavior, and that his company is now disbanded, as a matter of course."

Whether he spoke of his baffled hopes, Bianca's alleged duplicity or his modest belief that he was capable of playing "Hamlet" as no man had played it in London during the past quarter of a century, Lady Cora enjoyed his conversation. It charmed her to have him recount original modes of treatment in the great scenes—how he would see the *Ghost* and address him; how he would "read" the last colloquy between *Hamlet* and *Ophelia*; how he would introduce new bits of "business" into the thrilling denunciation of the Queen Mother by her son.

Lady Arrowcroft did not appear at lunch, and hence their conversation was continued without interruption after they had seated themselves at table. Their wine was champagne of a dry and excellent vintage. It brightened Crieff's spirits, loosened his tongue, heightened his color, freshened the native lustre of his eyes.

It came into Lady Cora's mind that some day—not just now, but some day—she might give him encouragement to make her an offer of marriage. True, he was an actor, but then she adored the stage, and would have become an actress herself if she had dared risk dire failure. As it was, he appealed to her more than in the days that preceded his American tour. She had greatly admired him for a long time. It was rather because of his beauty than his intelligence, though she insisted on his ample possession of the latter gift. If, however, with his wealth of comeliness he had combined any touch of effeminacy, she would have paid him slight heed. He would have been to her just as interesting, too, if overmanful to the degree of roughness. What delighted her in him she would have called the perfect medium between refinement and virility. And while she refilled his glass more than

once with champagne, it also struck her that he was really quite as well born as she was; that although her mother had nearly all the family money, a large amount of it could easily be got from this most complaisant of parents at a few days' notice, and that to watch his shining achievements as his wife, Lady Cora Crieff, would be something novel and delicious, even though snobs who were too much snobs to dream of cutting her might turn up their noses in clandestine disgust.

"It's too bad," he said, after the footman had gone, "that I can't have some new and brilliant play written for me! I dropped into the Garrick Club last night and saw Leith Osmond there. He's an immensely clever tactician, as everyone admits. But you may have heard his constant cry: 'Give me an idea!' Now I haven't an idea, in his sense of the word; for what he means is a positive plot. I know the kind of thing I'd prefer to do—nearly every mime among us knows that. But when it comes to an actual— You've grown pale," he broke off. "What is it? Are you ill?"

"No." A certain remembrance, dormant since her meeting with Crieff, had pierced her consciousness. "I am quite well. I—I felt interested, that's all." Then she tried, in her secret turmoil, to find another sentence. "Would—would Gale put on such a play for you? But if he wouldn't, some other manager might be secured, of course."

"Such a play?" Crieff repeated. "Do you mean if Leith Osmond should get his idea and develop it splendidly?"

"Yes—if he, or someone else, should get a wonderful idea," replied Lady Cora, with short, nervous nods.

Crieff looked at her keenly. "A wonderful idea? Of course Gale would bring me out in it; anybody would. But such finds are rare nowadays. That would be my great chance, to star in a play like that. Have you got one?" he asked, half-

mirthfully. "It always has seemed to me that you might have one, either in your brain or your portfolio."

"Always? Really!" She lifted a forefinger. "Or have you only suspected since an instant ago?"

He had not suspected at all, but something in her face and voice made him do so now. Then the revulsion came, and he swiftly thought: "Oh, she's clever enough, but if she's written anything, or imagined anything, it will probably prove one of those million commonplace tediums that women are forever scribbling." Aloud he asked: "May I light a cigarette?" And on receiving her prompt permission, he added this to his ruminations: "Good Lord! I dare say she has a manuscript that she'll read to me till it's past six o'clock." But while lighting his cigarette he now sputtered out the only thing—the perfidiously complimentary thing—that there was left him to say:

"Knowing you, my dear Lady Cora, is to be conscious of your mental gifts and graces."

The pretty remark did not appear to touch her. Indeed, she seemed wholly heedless of it, tasting her wine and scanning some vague scrollwork in the white sheen of the linen whence she had lifted it.

Last night she had taken her first step in evil-doing. Repentance had followed, and only so short a while ago she had set forth to cleanse her soul of the degrading fault. She had yielded, then, to the temptation of mean, undignified eavesdropping. It was temptation of a different kind now. It sprang from love—or so she assured herself. It sprang not only from love, but compassion as well. She must have been loving this man all through his absence, and had not comprehendingly counted the pulses of her own heart. And now she could aid him in the most potent way. But of course he was a man of honor, and would never accept the product of Oliver Wraybourne's intellect unless given with the playwright's full consent. And so, if she told him the Wonderful Idea and revealed the fact

that it was Oliver's conception, her effort might prove wholly futile.

She had not regained her lost color, and this fact, blent with her silence, wrought in him, as she became each moment more tinglingly aware, an increased surprise.

"I think I share," she at length said, speaking what was just then most dominant in her mind, "your feeling of resentment toward Bianca."

"Ah," he replied, his face immediately clouding, "she should have given me some intimation either in the States or during our voyage home. It was treachery to behave as she did. I know what her excuse would be—that she had acted from the prompting of an impulse." Here Crieff leaned back with a bitter laugh. "As if her course were therefore pardonable! I worked faithfully in my service of her."

"Yes," fired Lady Cora, "and you clearly eclipsed her in two classical plays."

Crieff crushed a biscuit between his teeth. "Oh, it is all rank jealousy—nothing else."

"Not her retirement from the stage? You don't mean that?"

"Oh, no; but her failure to tell me that she meant retirement." Crieff looked very nobly indignant. One would not have suspected that Bianca had reinstated him at her side when he haughtily quitted her company because of a just rebuke for having tried to "out-act" her, nor that in America he had sought to become her husband with a motive of cold-blooded self-profit.

Lady Cora, it is certain, had not the faintest suspicion of these past events. "You seem to me quite martyred!" she said, with pity in her eyes and tremors about her lips.

"Oh, not so bad as that," he laughed. "But the play you spoke of—if you have it, may I not take it home and read it?"

"I haven't it," she returned.

"Ah," he persisted, "then someone else has?"

She felt a little dizzy. She fancied

that if she tried to speak, her next words would be a kind of rattle or gasp.

He stared at her. "Oh, I see; you've thought out something and feel modest about letting me hear it."

She gave no answer at first. Then, slowly, while he watched her wan face and wondered at it, she let the devil have his way with her.

"I *have* thought out something," she said. "Listen." She continued speaking, with her eyes fixed on the dim arabesques in the tablecloth. Now and then she lifted her glassful of wine and moistened her lips. Without knowing, she would sometimes repeat long passages from Oliver Wraybourne's monologue almost *verbatim*. Sometimes, too, she would unconsciously imitate his touches of vehemence and passion. This lasted about twenty minutes. Then, at the end, after nothing further remained to be said, she lifted her eyes and looked Crieff full in the face.

His evident surprise and delight dazzled her. With all her admiration of his beauty she had never dreamed that it could be so brilliantly augmented. He sprang from his chair, strode round to her side and stood before her, palpitant with excitement.

"This is magnificent—marvelous! And it is yours?"

"Mine," she wrenched out.

"And you'll do it? You'll put it into shape for me?"

"No," she said, smotheredly. "Leith Osmond could do it far better. Best let him, by all means."

"Osmond will go daft over it. What a splendid idea!"

She rose, then, and put out her hand. "You must make me a promise. You must swear me the most sacred oath that you will never tell Osmond or any living being from whom this plot came."

He looked at her puzzledly. He wasn't thinking of any refusal to take the oath she required of him; he was thinking, rather, of her having had such a supreme conception enter her brain.

"You won't promise, then?" she cried, in startled tones.

"Promise? Oh, willingly." And he gave her his hand, about which for a moment her fingers clung tense and strangely cold.

VII

BIANCA soon left her hotel and took a fairly spacious house in St. John's Wood, prettily furnished, for an indefinite period. "I pay by the month," she told her friends, "but there are strong chances of my owners not turning me out with any violent suddenness. They are a pair of married invalids, my agents declare, and have a fixed belief that London is poisonous for both of them." To her treasured friend and former preceptress, Mrs. Barclay Boyd, she said one day: "I shall stop on here till the end of the season, and entertain with moderate gaiety until late July."

"And then?" asked Mrs. Boyd.

"Oh, then I shall probably go to Scarborough for a little while—perhaps not over a fortnight."

"And then?" gently persisted Mrs. Boyd.

Bianca flushed and gave a laugh. "You *are* inquisitive! Still, you've a right to be. I won't rebel. What is it?" Her eyes took in the fair, open, kindly face and the tall, imposing figure. There had been days when this noble-looking woman, now grown, alas, too portly for almost any part, had played *Lady Macbeth* before packed London audiences. But she had declined gracefully and with policy, as so few actresses manage to decline, and had made herself celebrated as a teacher of her art before age and the bitter doom of waning popularity had driven her penniless from the boards.

"You ask me what it is, Bianca," Mrs. Boyd said, laying a hand on the wrist of her former pupil, whom she tenderly loved and of whom she was immensely proud. "It's this, dear—people have begun to deny that you intend leaving the stage at all."

Bianca slowly nodded assent. "Perhaps I shall return to it for a certain time."

"Not under Gale, I hope. He is such an unpleasant creature."

"Never again under Gale."

"Oh, I see. Oliver Wraybourne is going to write you something and give it to another manager."

It was Bianca's turn to lay a hand on the arm of her ex-instructress.

"My dear friend, nothing is settled yet. When it is you shall be the first to hear my plans."

"You've not seen Gale since you announced your retirement?"

"No. He's written me a very reproachful letter. It narrowly escaped being insulting. He accuses me of having treated him with great cruelty. That is absurd. He has made a great deal of money from my performances, and our contract definitely ended when I returned from America. He wants me to meet him, and perhaps, before long, I shall."

She did; but under circumstances that were then totally unforeseen.

Gale, as it chanced, drifted into the Savage Club two or three nights later. A voice from one of the tables called his name. He strolled toward the table and found Alan Crieff and Leith Osmond seated there. After he had shaken hands with both, Crieff said, pointing to Osmond:

"Hang me if the fellow hasn't done it, even quicker than I told you he would."

"It?" questioned Gale, with a bewildered droop of his flabby under lip.

"Don't you remember?" muttered Crieff, knowing perfectly well that he remembered.

Had it been otherwise Gale would not have joined these two young men. On every side he was receiving bows and smiles of welcome. Not a few of those who gave them hated him, but all who happened to be actors recognized him as a power that might make or mar. Here was evidence of that enormously crowded condition in which the English dramatic profession now finds itself. Hundreds of tal-

ented artists are often threatened with starvation; literally thousands, of lesser equipment, live lives tragic with unending struggle.

"Ah, yes," Gale said, affecting recollection. "Yes, yes. You allude to our talk about a fortnight ago." He fixed his eyes on Leith Osmond, and continued, with a quick glance right and left, and in a tone carefully modulated: "Alan told me the Wonderful Idea, as he calls it, and as I call it, too." Here he laid on the table a big, white, flaccid fist and looked intently into Osmond's face. "I believe in you," he said. "I fully sanctioned Alan's plan of having you work the play out. And you *have* worked it out in four weeks? Good! That is," he added, with a little dubious grin, familiar in countless phases to many a member of his former companies, whether torn by anxiety or thrallled by hope, "that is, I say, provided you've done your task in acceptable fashion."

"I'm sure you'll think so, Gale, when you've heard it," said Alan. "Osmond," he went on, "has a room here in Adelphi Terrace, only a step away. Why not come and listen to his four acts?"

"I so seldom listen to a play," the renowned manager grumbled. "Still, in this case . . ." He rose, saying no more. Five minutes later the three men were in Osmond's room, with its windows overlooking the Thames, black and mysterious below a heavenful of stars.

Osmond began promptly to read. Act followed act, with intermissions of enthusiastic praise from Crieff, but from Gale not a syllable. He looked sleepy, now and then; he brightened, occasionally, in a sluggish way; once or twice he shifted his big, jellylike frame in his chair, which was too small for him, and from which he seemed to overflow in random rolls of adipose.

At the end of the third act he grunted, solemnly, "Good!" At the end of the play he rose, looked at his watch, and repeated, "Good!" three times. Then to Crieff:

"This might be Oliver Wraybourne's work."

"Thank you," said Osmond, folding up his manuscript. "You couldn't pay me a higher compliment."

Gale scratched one of his loose-hanging cheeks. "I can get the Duke of Cambridge's Theatre in three weeks' time. I'll put it on there."

He looked again at Crieff, who was trying not to let his eyes too palpably sparkle. "You—er—own this very remarkable idea, Alan, I am given to understand?"

"It's entirely mine," returned Alan. He felt that in lying thus he lied with thorough good faith to Lady Cora.

"Um—yes," replied Gale. He was meditatively bunching the pendant tissue of his chin into one capacious palm. "I suppose you see that there are two great parts in it. One is just as good as *Judith*. You'll agree to that?"

Osmond struck in here. "An inevitable effect in developing the piece. I saw that to lighten the woman's part would be to hurt, if not spoil, the idea."

"Quite so," said Gale. "I don't disagree with you at all." He seemed again to ruminate. "How finely Bianca Rotheroyd would play it!"

"But she's left the stage, you know!" exclaimed Crieff. He detested the thought of having Bianca play the feminine part. He had in mind a very pretty and rather able actress, infinitely below Bianca, with whom he could deal just as he wished. She would be delighted to get the part, anyway, and she would repress herself when he so exacted, leaving him all desired opportunities for self-prominence.

"There's a rumor, I admit," continued Crieff, "that she isn't going to retire. But I feel pretty confident that this is only because of her being seen so often with Wraybourne, driving or riding in the Park."

Gale rose. "I'll put it on, in three weeks' time," he said, "at the theatre I named. Come to me, both of you, to-morrow at eleven. You know my present office there in the Strand.

We'll have much to arrange, but I want to skim the cream of the season if I can. And now I must be getting off home. It's seldom I ever hear a play read. It's rarer still for me to stay abroad so late as now. No, no," to Osmond, "not a drop. I haven't tasted whiskey more than once or twice in my life. And no tobacco, either, thanks. I gave it up twenty years ago."

"Victory!" exclaimed Crieff, when Gale had departed.

"Indisputable," beamed Osmond. "What care he takes of himself! Has he some chronic ailment?"

Crieff laughed oddly. "Wasn't it Disraeli who said of Gladstone that he hadn't a redeeming vice? Well, Gale has two redeeming virtues. He neither drinks nor smokes."

"Good heavens!" Osmond said, "I hope you're not inferring that he ever swindles?"

"Never. He's straight as a string in money matters."

"Why, then, you leave him a very clean record indeed."

"Oh, do I?" Crieff hesitated. "By the way, he does drink, at times—champagne. But not often with men. He seems to prefer it in a different sort of convivialism."

"Ah, yes—I see," nodded Osmond.

VIII

WITH Oliver's full assent Bianca had agreed to meet Gale, and he appeared at her house the next afternoon a little after five.

She greeted him as if they had not been separated a day. She had never deported herself toward him in any cordial manner; she had always, indeed, maintained with him a kind of mistress-and-servant demeanor, which he now meekly enough accepted.

"So you've concluded," she said, "that I wasn't such a cruel person, after all."

"Ah, but you were," he affirmed, with pained gravity. "You left me so suddenly, you know——"

"But you see, I so suddenly realized that I wanted to play no longer."

He sighed heavily. "You, who had many thousands of pounds yet to make!"

"I'm one of those vastly unusual people who don't place money beyond all other sources of human happiness."

"Ah, but is it fair to throw away such golden chances?"

"Fair?" she repeated.

"You may marry. Excuse me, but they say you may soon marry Oliver Wraybourne. If so, I congratulate you most heartily, Miss Rotheroyd. You could not well find a worthier husband."

Bianca laughed, rather against her will. "Your congratulations are decidedly premature. Still, I'm glad that you have Mr. Wraybourne in your good books. I think he deserves a place there."

Gale assumed an ursine sportiveness. "Ah, not if he keeps you out of the theatre! And I can't quite understand his not persuading you to go back. Now don't frown on me. Wraybourne is a born dramatist, and one of the rarest ability. He loves the stage, too, and some day he will probably do something so strong that you can't resist creating the chief woman part in it. By the way, that reminds me."

Bianca knew her ex-manager so well that she instantly divined in those last three words the real motive that had brought him beneath her roof. "That reminds me" meant, she swiftly concluded, that Gale was to spring something in the way of an offer. He wanted her back with him, and had devised some new inducement. She laughed to herself as she thought of a great golden offer. Everybody has his price, runs the proverb; but hers would have to be a far bigger one than Gale might dream of proffering.

"That reminds me," her visitor repeated, pulling at his cuffs and tapping with his lavender gloves one mammoth, bulbous-kneed leg, "I've

accepted a play by Alan Crieff and Leith Osmond. I mean to do it very soon at the Duke of Cambridge's."

"How interesting!" said Bianca. "Two remarkably clever men. One might expect something very fine."

"Fine? My dear lady, it's immense!" And up flew Gale's hands in gyrations more expressive than adjectives. "If you would only take the feminine rôle it would be a greater success than 'Judith'—and heaven knows we got a pot of money from that, didn't we? It will be a success anyway, even without your genius to illuminate it. But *with* that genius, there's no telling how high it would mount."

"You're very good," said Bianca, and with heartiness. Knowing this man so well, she felt certain that he would praise no mediocre thing in such florid terms. His long dramatic experience forbade such enthusiasm, and though he had staged plenty of rubbish in past years, it was doubtful if he had ever, with all his faults of taste, mistaken dross for wheat.

"Crieff, as I'll tell you frankly, Miss Rotheroyd, mightn't like you to appear in the play at all. You know why; we've talked over his vaulting ambitions. But I could easily annul them. There isn't a first-class theatre to be had in London till the season's over, and I've got this one house in a grip as tight as steel."

Bianca smiled, shaking her head negatively. Nevertheless, curiosity swayed her. "Do you mean," she asked, "that the play is at all in the same vein as 'Judith'?"

"No; and yet Oliver Wraybourne might have conceived it; I grant you that. The idea of it is the main point. It is a wonderful idea—absolutely new to the stage, and absolutely wonderful."

"A wonderful idea!" Bianca's answer conveyed involuntary surprise. She was thinking of the evening, not so long ago, when almost these same words had escaped her with nearly the same ring of laudation as that just betrayed by Gale. "It must be

something enormously clever. You doubtless mean that."

"I mean precisely that. Osmond has made some pretty light-comedy scenes, and as for the idea itself, he has comprehended its possibilities perfectly, and his treatment has been very skilful. The work could not have been entrusted to better hands."

"You speak as if this wonderful idea were not his own."

Gale seemed to weigh her question. "Oh, you're aware, just as I am, that Osmond is always wanting an idea," he said, finally.

"I see," said Bianca. "And who supplied him with this unique one? Was it Alan Crieff?"

"It came from Crieff—yes. Actors, I have found, seldom write well, but often get hold of striking conceptions."

"Alan has a capable mind," said Bianca, reflectively. "I can understand how he might hit on some new and powerful *donnée*."

"Ah!" said Gale, with his most lavish smile, "you give him a good word, then?"

"Have I ever given him a bad one?" replied Bianca.

"No, I can't really recall that you have. Indeed, Miss Rotheroyd, I think you've shown him great toleration."

"He has ambition, and I comprehended it. For that matter, I rather sympathized with him; and I do so still more, nowadays, when I'm no longer ambitious myself."

"Yes," said Gale, pulling a serious face, which produced in his lower lip the old, familiar laxity and flap. "And excuse me, but perhaps you may be influenced by the report that Crieff is soon to become the husband of your cousin, Lady Cora Valance."

"It doesn't influence me a bit," said Bianca, curtly. "I know they are often together; I sometimes meet them side by side at entertainments. I think my cousin—who isn't an actress—is foolish to marry an actor, and you, of all persons, Gale, know perfectly well why."

"Her title——"

"Oh, bother her title! Alan Crieff is of quite as good a family as she, and a title wouldn't aid him a whit in the long run. Nothing will aid him but talent. Nothing ever really aids a player but that. However, your drama with the great idea. Will you tell it to me?"

"I must," said Gale, assuming a pathetic helplessness.

"Must? Why?"

"Oh, because I want your assistance in making it a still more glorious 'go' than I feel sure it's destined to be."

Bianca leaned toward him, clad in her simple muslin gown, with a smile, half-incredulous, half-trustful, on her dimly divided lips.

"By heaven," thought Gale, "how dazzlingly beautiful she is at times! I suppose beauty has been half the battle with her, though she certainly can act when the part suits. And how this part ought to suit! She should take to it as a swan takes to the Thames."

At once he began the story of the play, and he told it with swift and succinct deftness. He bore in mind that he spoke as manager to actress, and he lopped away in his narration every wisp of avoidable verbiage. He laid bare, by quick yet careful strokes, the entire anatomy of the work, act after act. Once or twice during his delivery Bianca's face paled and quivered, but she kept her head drooped, in the attitude of an intent listener, and so these changes failed to catch his attention.

"Now!" he concluded, at length, clutching both arms of his easy-chair and leaning toward Bianca, "*now!*"

Bianca raised her head and met his little, enkindled eyes. "What does your very vehement 'now' mean?" she asked; "that you want me to tell you how good I think the play?"

Her apathetic mode of approval brought from Gale a subdued harsh expression. He rose limply to his feet. "In the name of all that's amazing, don't you *think* it good?"

"Very!" said Bianca. She was

looking directly, while she spoke, at a little clock on the near mantel.

"You must pardon me, Gale," she went on, "but I'm engaged for the rest of the afternoon. I've promised to appear at two teas, and St. John's Wood is not so very close to Green street, and still further from Eaton Square." She also rose. "You won't mind, I'm sure."

"But—but—you're deceiving me!" her guest sputtered out. He mopped his face with a kerchief, though the day was not warm.

"Deceiving you? How?"

"You *do* like this great thing, and you want to disguise your liking."

There were one or two moments, now, when Bianca had an impulse literally tigerish. But Gale did not suspect her thought. A passionate desire to see Oliver and tell him everything restrained her more than the instinct of breeding.

"I do like the great thing, as you call it," she said.

"But you won't play in it?"

"I will decide—later."

"Oh, you leave it open, then?" He saw the soft flesh just below her chin grow tense for an instant, and perceived that she had lost color.

"I—I leave it open—yes." She moved toward the door; it was a polite dismissal. He was compelled to accept it.

But on the threshold he roughly rebelled. "Something's the matter. For God's sake, don't behave to me, your old manager, like this! We always got on well together. I've never posed for a saint, but I always showed you my best side, if I have any. Bianca—excuse me, Miss Rotheroyd—you must know, as I know, that this play promises a prodigious hit."

"I do know," she acceded.

"Well, then?" Glare and agitation went with the two short words.

"I can give you no present answer."

Gale was visibly writhing. "Oh, you must see Wraybourne first!" he snarled, with a sarcasm curiously tearful.

"Perhaps," Bianca said, walking

away. She felt so weak and dizzy herself that she feared breaking down wofully and saying things that she would afterward regret and that Oliver would reproach her for having uttered.

A little later, when Gale had so palpably gone that she could hear his heavy step of departure in the outer hall, a deep sense of relief came over her. But it was soon succeeded by the fervid desire to see Oliver and tell him all that had just been poured into her astonished ears. She wondered if it would be too late for a telegram to reach him at his everyday quarters in the Temple. Deciding that the hour yet permitted, she hurried with all speed to the nearest post-office. She made her message very urgent, and then went back to her home, waiting there with pangs of intensest expectancy.

IX

It seemed an age till she saw, from behind one of the front-window curtains, a cab dash up to her door.

Of late she and Oliver had often met. Between them now existed a perfect understanding. He had failed as yet to procure a theatre for his new play, though in this regard he had by no means abandoned hope. The season had still many weeks to run, and some sudden theatric failure might give him a chance. As for Bianca's determination to bid the stage a long farewell after she had played in his new piece, Oliver was beginning to take, on this subject, an entirely altered view. His sweet-heart had spoken very frankly with him; she had made him grasp, in much of its most forbidding severity, the reason of her distastes. Oliver had begun to see in the future a home presided over by peaceful, un lurid gods. Bianca would have ceased to be an actress, but into his own life would have come just the pleasant spice it craved. Provided he grew a very famous dramatist, what more charming than to possess in her his

one supreme critic and mentor? The more he contemplated this picture the more it pleased him. In a little time he had grown to imagine Bianca as the light of a very happy home. They were each of the same social standing; in a general sense they had the same circle of friends. The smarter cliques—those of them who were dowered with brains and not merely accoutred in snobbishness—would meet, below their roof, what upper bohemia held of the best. As an adored actress Bianca might rouse his pride; but would she not kindle in his heart a less fitful and excited glow as the steadfast and unalienated companion, as perhaps—most vital question of all—the mother of their children?

Latterly these thoughts had visited him with much persistence. To-day especially they had intruded upon his mind, creeping between some rather dry documentary lines. Hence, no doubt, the sharp appeal of Bianca's telegram had borne in upon him with peculiar stress.

After the maid admitted him Bianca advanced to greet him at the threshold of the reception-room. She closed the door as soon as he was at her side. She let him kiss her without a word. Then, putting a hand on each of his shoulders, she said:

"You received my wire?"

"Yes."

"Oh, Oliver!"

"What is it? What is it, my darling?"

"Such a terribly strange thing!"

"Strange? Tell me."

She kissed him softly on the cheek, letting her hands drop to her sides.

"You'll be horrified."

"It doesn't concern *you*?"

"No; it concerns your play—your new play. Gale has been here this afternoon. But he's innocent, perfectly innocent, I'll swear—and so will you when you've heard. He came to beg that I would play in it. Think of that! *In your play!* I refused, and he asked me if I would only listen to the story. Then I un-

derstood—or at least, I did *not!* See if you will or can, Oliver dear."

She spoke more collectedly for some time after this. They had seated themselves close together, and every now and then their hands would meet, with fingers tightening or loosening.

"You are right about Gale," at length said Oliver. "He knows nothing of this fraud. I always believed him honest, and I believe him so still. Besides, think of his putting his head into the lion's jaws, provided he *did* know. It would be too preposterous. You are the last woman in the world to whom he would come if he had the vaguest suspicion that the idea was stolen from me."

"Stolen!" moaned Bianca. "But how, and by whom?"

They sat silent, watching each other's face. On a sudden Bianca cried out, with great bitterness:

"Oh, Oliver, you are suffering! And why not? This masterpiece! You were so proud of it; you had in it so intense a confidence! And now invisible hands have torn it from you! Or might there, could there, have been—?" She stopped dead short.

"Well?" he said, as if eager for any clue.

"—a coincidence?" Bianca finished.

"Ah," ejaculated Oliver; "you mean that someone else might have had the same idea as my own? Alan Crieff, for instance, giving it afterward to Leith Osmond?"

"Yes. That *is* my meaning."

Oliver sat for some time staring at a figure in the carpet, his chin half-shrouded by one hollowed hand. "No," he presently declared. "The plot, as you repeat it from Gale's lips, too closely resembles what I told you at Lady Cora's house weeks ago. Its treatment is not like my own—not what I have given to my now completed work—but there are shades, lights, touches, explanations and suggestions, here and there, that must shatter your theory of coincidence. In some respects the entire plan is

worked out better than I have worked out mine."

"Better!" bridled Bianca. "No, no!"

"Leith Osmond, for all his professed vacuum as regards something to write about, is defter in his technique than I. Now and then I could trace his admirable skill as you repeated to me Gale's *résumé*. But we waste time," he interrupted himself. "Thus far we have plainly learned two things: Alan Crieff claims to have conceived the plot, and to have bestowed it, for exploitation, on Leith Osmond. But to what conclusion does that lead?"

Bianca's answer was in her eyes, and very vague it seemed. Still, Oliver fancied that he read it.

"Cora Vallance?" he said.

"But she—" began Bianca.

"Oh, I know what you would say," Oliver interjected. "Your cousin left us while we were at dinner that evening. True, we heard her step on the stairs, and her voice as well, a long time afterward."

"You had finished telling me the Wonderful Idea," said Bianca.

"Yes, I had finished."

"Well, then, if you mean to accuse Cora—"

"I don't mean to accuse anyone."

"But, Oliver, you certainly hint."

"Circumstances hint."

Bianca's eyes flashed, then grew moist with tears. "My own blood-cousin—Cora! She could never have done such a frightful thing!"

"As what?" questioned Oliver. But Bianca turned from him, angered and trembling.

"Oh, if it's going to be that way!" muttered Oliver; and he moved from window to mantel, from table to piano, in troublous unrest.

"Oliver, forgive me!"

Bianca hurried toward him. "I know it was very wrong of me! Only, dearest, I did feel it such a horrible thing to say of my own kindred! Aunt Evelyn treated me badly enough, heaven knows! but to think that Cora could possibly have listened and then told Crieff! I won't believe it!

Nor will you, I'm certain, until we've proved it, if we ever can."

"If we ever can!" returned Oliver, while he kissed her uplifted lips.

"No one knew the Idea," he said, after a little silence, "except you and myself. I gave it to you at *her* house. Your aunt, Lady Arrowcroft, appeals to neither of us as a probable listener."

"Oh, Lady Arrowcroft!" cried Bianca. "That is too absurd! They had put her to bed long before."

"Of course they had," he agreed. Then, slowly nodding: "You have given Gale no actual answer? You have, as you said, left it open?"

"Yes; to gain time to see you I put him off like that. And now, Oliver, whom will you see first, Gale or Crieff?"

After a moment's meditation, Oliver replied: "Crieff, naturally."

X

THAT evening there were few happier men in London than Alan Crieff. Perhaps gratified ambition, while its first gay flags are being draped along the casements and balconies of one's future, making its visionary perspective every day more pictorial, has power to bestow the most pleasurable of all human thrills.

Crieff was not by any means in love with Lady Cora Vallance, but he was very much in love with the idea of marrying her. That same afternoon he had met her at a garden party at Hampstead, and amid a little bowery nook, almost too secluded for any of the nomadic footmen to find them with a tray of tea and cakes, Lady Cora had shyly yet definitely consented to become his wife. It was arranged that their engagement should be announced on the day after his first appearance in "her" play, for so Crieff insisted on calling it. Not for an instant would she hear of his abandoning his dramatic career. The stage was a passion with her, she declared, and it would be adorable to have such an actor as he for a hus-

band. They had agreed to call the play "The Temptation," and its rehearsals would begin very soon. Later that same day Crieff kept an appointment with Gale and Leith Osmond respecting a disposition of the cast. He arrived late at Gale's chambers in the Strand. He was intensely triumphant, and the excitement bred of this emotion became him in striking degree. While he shook hands with manager and author, Osmond laughingly said:

"You're ever so late, Alan, but you look ever so happy."

"I've good reason to be," came his answer, airy and merry—just the answer that a light man would make, in the circumstances, when almost inebriate with self-elation.

"What's happened?" asked Gale. "Who's the favoring damsel?"

And then, with words that had no sooner slipped from his lips than he repented them, Crieff returned:

"The sweetest and dearest one in all London, Lady Cora Vallance. We are engaged, and on the day after the first performance of our great play our engagement is to be made public."

Leith Osmond and Gale exchanged an astonished stare. Both realized perfectly that this daughter of an earl was no better in birth than Crieff; and yet for an actor, and especially one of no great eminence, here was a match that must soon set the town bristling with comment. To Gale such a union meant a glorious advertisement, and though, like Osmond, he freely gave his word that no gossip should escape him between now and the momentous day of disclosure, his tongue was already itching to sow sly, non-committal hints and innuendoes broadcast in restaurant, coulisse or club.

Crieff was going to a great crush given by one of the fashionable London grandees that night, and after dining quietly at an obscure grill-room he repaired to his apartments for the purpose of first resting a little, with the solace of a pipe, and then attiring himself in evening garb.

While the pipe was being lighted Oliver Wraybourne's card came to him. Very soon they were shaking hands.

"So glad, dear old Oliver," he said, wheeling up an easy-chair. "I see you're not going to Lady Trawle's to-night."

"No," said Oliver, seating himself. "Are you?" He ran his eye over Crieff's dim-flowered dressing-gown. "Lady Trawle was kind enough to ask me," he went on, "but I've concluded not to go."

Crieff was highly good-humored. "She's concluded also not to omit me."

"Why should she?" said Oliver. Without waiting for an answer, he pursued: "Then this means that you'll have to begin dressing in—how long?"

"Oh, I've a good hour yet. Do have a cigarette." He produced a case, and they were soon seated side by side.

Oliver came at once to the point. "Alan, you're going to have a play done for you by Gale at the Duke of Cambridge's."

"Yes. How did you learn?"

"Through Bianca."

Crieff looked astonished, and genuinely. "Bianca? How did she hear of this?"

"Through Gale. He called on her this afternoon and begged her to play the chief part in it."

"Oh, did he?" murmured Crieff, flushing. He went to the mantelpiece, hastily threw his pipe on a metal plate there, and returned to his seat. "One can never calculate on Gale."

"Why the devil," said Oliver, coldly, "do you speak like that? If you are going to bring out a play by Leith Osmond, why should you desire to conceal the fact?"

Crieff flung back his head. "I did not authorize Gale to engage Miss Rotheroyd as my leading lady."

Oliver laughed softly. It took very much more than this to make him lose his temper.

Still, with great firmness and force,

leaning a little forward in his chair, he said:

"Miss Rotheroyd did not accept Gale's offer—I may add, his entreating offer. You might, by the way, allude to her with less hauteur, since you were quite unknown to the stage when she kindly gave you your first chance."

"Oh," said Crieff, "if you came here to quarrel——"

"I did not come here to quarrel. I came here to ask you if you gave Leith Osmond the idea of your play, as you call it. Gale stated that you did so. Is this true?"

"Of course it is true. But I don't see what business it is of yours, Wraybourne, to——"

"To make any such query?" interjected Oliver. "Of course you don't—as matters stand. But I propose to make matters stand quite differently, Crieff. I propose to tell you that the idea of your play, as you gave it to Gale, is simply not your own at all."

Crieff quivered for an instant under the flashing eyes of his guest, set in a face wholly tranquil. Then pulling himself together, and scowling with defiance, he hurled out, excitedly:

"You can't prove what you state."

Oliver slowly rose from his chair. He dropped his half-burned cigarette into an ash-tray. "The idea of the play is mine."

"Yours?" burst from Crieff. A great change now occurred in him. He had always liked Oliver, for a long period had believed him a dramatist of high powers. It flashed into his brain that Lady Cora had practiced some deception. For a moment his faculties were in sorry tumult. A response leaped from him, but he bit it off sharply in the middle.

"Oh, no, no, Oliver, it couldn't possibly happen that she——"

His confusion was now most palpable. But the fatal feminine pronoun had been uttered, and he saw that his companion had quietly caught it up.

"By 'she,'" said Oliver, "did you mean Lady Cora Vallance?"

"Not at all," Crieff stammered. "I—I—had no such idea—none in the world."

"Then whom did you mean by 'she?'"

"I—the word—that is, the reference—escaped me—unawares."

Oliver nodded, with tight-shut lips, then answered, sternly: "This will not do, Alan. If 'she' is not the lady whom I named, then correct my error."

"Why," flared Crieff, knotting his hands, "should I be compelled to do so?"

"Because the play is mine, as I told you; and if some woman, whether Lady Cora or the wife of the man in the moon, gave you its general plot as her own, and induced you to let Leith Osmond put it into practical shape, you should feel honorably bound to enlighten me, all the same. Of your broken sentence I can easily supply the missing half—'It couldn't possibly happen that she would have played me false in so miserable a manner.' That stands for the full gist of what you intended to say, afterward changing your mind."

"You're a marvelous clairvoyant, truly," said the actor, with a sneer in his voice.

"Not marvelous in the least, for a baby could see through your desire to shield this thief."

"Thief!"

"Why not? One more word—do you deny that Lady Cora Vallance gave you the idea of this play?"

"Yes."

"Do you refuse to tell me who did give it to you?"

Pale and fiercely frowning, Crieff exclaimed: "I have not admitted the idea to be yours. I have not admitted that anybody gave it to me."

"Ah! Then you claim the idea as your own? You must take one course or the other. Which course do you wish to take? If the idea is not yours, it is mine. If the idea is both yours and mine, then it is one that came more or less contemporaneously to

each of us. Things of this sort have happened, I freely grant it."

Full of repressed perturbation, Crieff looked for an instant as if he might deal his guest a blow. But prudence, even then, rescued him from such folly. Deeply it had now been burned into his consciousness that Oliver was the real author of the play. He saw his cherished design of acting in "The Temptation" alarmingly threatened. He saw, too, the hateful chance of losing Lady Cora for his wife. Harried, perplexed, lashed by a sudden and totally unanticipated stroke, he clutched, with the desperation of one that drowns, at Oliver's final sentences.

"Very well. You say that I must take one course or the other. If the idea is not yours, it is mine, naturally."

"Provided you claim it as yours," Oliver suggested. "Do you so claim?"

"Yes." With hueless cheeks, but in an unflinching voice, Crieff brought the word out. Then he tried to lie with dignity, and by no means failed. That few actors can act well off the stage has become almost a truism among those who know them and observe how perceptibly they suffer on such occasions from a lack of scenic aid. But in this instance Crieff delivered his falsehood with telling effect.

"The truth," he went on, "must be explainable by what you yourself have suggested. We must both have been visited with the same conception. May I ask the name of your play?"

"It has no name as yet," said Oliver, withdrawing a few steps toward the door, his face wan with disgust. "But its characters are named, and four or five of them, more or less important, bear the same titles as those you have adopted. For example, *Philip Thorp*; for example, again, *Adela Olcott*. These were mentioned by Gale to Miss Rotheroyd this afternoon. *Now, how did he come by them?* Oddly enough, I never thought of remarking the co-

incidence till after I had left Miss Rotheroyd's house. I had too much else to think of, especially one astounding fact—the fact that my play had been overheard by somebody when I recited it. *I never recited it but once.* That was in what I supposed absolute privacy, to Miss Rotheroyd, after a dinner in Lady Cora's house, when she, as we both believed, was remaining in the society of a sick friend."

The words were so many daggers to Crieff. He closed his eyes and dropped backward a little, clutching the framework of a chair.

"Best come out with the facts, as far as you know them," Oliver somberly advised. "Those names, you must accede, are fatal. Someone listened while I recited my play at Lady Cora's house. There is simply no other explanation conceivable."

Crieff shook his head in violence of negation. "*I did not listen! I'll swear that, a thousand times!*"

"And by so doing you incriminate Lady Cora."

Crieff staggered to the mantel and buried his head between upflung hands. "Again I swear to you," came his muffled voice, "that nothing has ever been told me regarding your authorship of the play. Nothing, nothing! I never dreamed of it!"

"Then you admit that the plot is *not* your own?"

"Yes—it is not mine."

"Someone else gave it to you?"

A long silence. "Someone else gave it to me."

Oliver stood staring for awhile at the bowed head and the circled arms in which the head was nested. Then, feeling quite sure who had stolen the Idea and palmed it off as original, he passed from Crieff's chambers.

XI

LADY TRAWLE knew everybody, and everybody came to her great ball in her huge Grosvenor Square house.

When it is said that she "knew" everybody, one should add that she was acquainted with a limited percentage of her guests only by name. That is the great drawback to all modern multitudinous London gatherings. The season is short, and the smart women who wish to have assemblages of grand proportions must of necessity welcome strangers. Lady Trawle was bringing out a daughter this year. For a few weeks she had come up to town from the country. She belonged among the London exclusives, but there were many persons quite her equal in rank whom she desired at her large function, yet who chose to be less fashionable than she. Perhaps Royalty had not been so benignant to these as to herself; perhaps these had not so assiduously sought the smiles of Royalty. Nevertheless, they had their own positions in the various counties, their distinguished titles, their ancient names to which titles were not always attached. They must not be overlooked, and they were all invited. Hence her great ball became at once an affair conscientious and absurd. Then, to render matters worse, there were the upper middle classes, who came in great throngs. All of these latter—barristers, rich merchants, pushing Members of Parliament, even authors more or less renowned—made a point of appearing. In such cases they always do, though the *Morning Post* and *Telegraph* are not apt to mention their names on the following day. Everybody expected a mixture, and hence there was no surprise. People who did not know each other were constantly in a jammed-together position, and people who did know each other exchanged glances across depressing deserts of unfamiliar chins and noses.

Bianca, being a celebrity, had an advantage not conceded to some of the smartest peeresses. Coming late, she was measurably made way for, and Oliver Wraybourne—also a celebrity, though one of different kind—passed up the stairs in her wake.

Bianca had had no intention to ap-

pear at the ball that evening. But after leaving Crieff's chambers Oliver had gone to her. They had talked most earnestly for a long while, and then Bianca had said: "I must see Cora to-night; I *must* see her."

"But a row at a ball!" dissented Wraybourne. "Good heavens! You can't mean such folly!"

"There won't be the faintest row," replied Bianca. "I simply want to see her there with her beloved Alan, and say to her a few words. You're not dressed; go at once, and I'll meet you at Lady Trawle's doorway at precisely twenty minutes to twelve. If you're not there I'll go right in. The actress, you know, learns how to dress with speed. I've a perfect maid, as I told you; she used to be my 'dresser' at the theatres."

At this same moment Crieff and Bianca's cousin were standing together in a palm-screened alcove at Lady Trawle's crowded abode.

The more he said the more she tried to steel herself into an attitude of defiance and defense. One minute she felt that discovery of her course was beyond all detective reach; the next minute she found herself quailing with fright.

"You showed the most piteous weakness to Oliver Wraybourne," she at length broke out.

"Weakness?" he faltered.

"You promised me that you would never let a soul know who gave you the Idea."

"I kept my promise."

"Ah, but how! You let him go away suspecting me."

Their eyes met, then drooped apart. "I was agitated," Crieff said. "But Wraybourne suspected you from the first. Can you blame me, Cora? I stayed loyal to *you*. How could I persist in the falsehood of my own position, after that damning citation of names that your cousin had received from Gale?"

She listened for a moment to the music floating up through the hot drawing-rooms from leafy seclusions below. But the strains wrought on her face no softness of expression;

they seemed to make it, instead, only dogged and sullen.

"How treacherous of Gale, when he knew that you did not wish Bianca to play with you in 'The Temptation!' . . . Well, these names—?" and Lady Cora drew in a long breath, ending it by a tightening of the lips. "I suppose they are damning, as you state. Rehearsals begin to-morrow. We're in a piteous plight—or at least you are. I think I shall take mamma to Paris at once."

"And desert me, Cora!" Crieff reproached.

"How possibly can I serve you here? All that I did was done for your aid; and now Leith Osmond's use of those names, and your confession to Oliver that the Wonderful Idea was not your own, have made me powerless to work you further good. Besides, you admit that Oliver suspects me. All the more reason that I should prevent him from questioning me."

"And if he did? You would then say—?"

Lady Cora lightly struck with her fan one of the spiked palm leaves at her side. "I would dare him to prove his assertion." She looked at Crieff fixedly. "You have not betrayed me; I don't think you could do anything so odious. You may have your own strong suspicions now as to the Wonderful Idea not being mine." She gave a shrill, almost acrid laugh. "Well, have them or not, as you please. But even if you wanted to betray me—"

"Cora!" he shot in, desolately.

"—still, I should be altogether safe."

Her tones repelled him. They talked on and on. He discovered that she was very much frightened, and yet that her fear was armored in bravado. Never having loved her, he perceived with so much quicker vision that dread of public scandal had already shaken, like a feeble scaffolding, whatever passion he might have roused. As before chronicled of this young woman, everything about her was partial; she lived and

moved in an atmosphere of incompleteness. At present she had neither sufficient fidelity to stick stanchly by Crieff nor sufficient selfishness to throw him over.

"My advice," came her next words, "would be for you, Alan, to tell Gale and Leith Osmond that you shall simply not appear in the play. Then let Oliver contend with them, provided they persist in bringing it out. Evade all quarrel; be reticent and firm."

"Reticent and firm!" Crieff groaned. "Ah, Cora, what are you saying? One would suppose that dishonor was not waiting to stamp me under its heel. Whichever course I take now my career will be ruined. I have been trapped by Oliver. On their own parts Gale and Osmond will rise up against me. For have I not told them that the whole story of the play originated with myself?" He reached for her hand, in its long white glove, and she let him hold it a little while. The shadow of disgrace was over him, and he knew that it might soon grow night-like, darkening his career forever. But though he had no love for the girl beside him, and wanted her as his wife solely because of her social place, his next sentences breathed quintessential truth.

"There is no power on earth, Cora, that could wring from me one syllable of admission concerning yourself! And yet it stabs me to the heart when I remember that either Oliver or your cousin, Bianca, might be enabled to cast on you the most fatal of charges."

She snatched her hand away. "I told you I would dare him to prove his assertion. With her it would be the same. Still, it's doubtless better I should leave for Paris to-morrow with mamma. And neither of them shall see me before my departure. When I return the affair may have blown over. They have no proof—none!" She spoke the last words like a challenge, but in her eyes Crieff could see latent panic.

"Well, then," he said, soothingly,

"go, by all means. Take the afternoon boat, and I will see you off at Dover. But I shall hope for your letters; they will help me so much to bear whatever happens; and perhaps, a little later, you'll let me join you in Paris—why not?"

They both started at the sound of a voice. "Oh, Cora, you're here! We were searching for you. Oliver is with me as well. I do hope we haven't spoiled a precious little chat."

Bianca spoke with exceeding mildness, as she glided between two low-hung sprays of palm. She looked very serene, and also radiantly handsome in a simple gown, with only a few jewels. Oliver, a step or two behind her, became promptly visible.

Lady Cora crushed a handkerchief against her lips. She had grown almost as pale as its filmy fabric. Crieff tried to smile, but with poor success. So these four suddenly met, with babble and laughter just beyond them, and further away the sweet intertangled revelries of flutes, violins and harps.

XII

LADY CORA spoke first. "You appear very gracious and honeyed, Bianca, but I know quite well that secretly you are neither."

"Hypocrisy is a hard accusation, Cora," was her cousin's reply. "And especially from you."

"How have I been hypocritical, Bianca?"

"You ask that with great self-confidence."

"She's the right to do so," Crieff broke in here. "However you and Wraybourne may blame *me*, you've neither of you reason to accuse *her*."

Bianca gave him a quick, withering look. Then she turned her eyes on Lady Cora.

"I have only a few words to say," she murmured, "and they are for you and not for this gentleman. Unfortunately, you discharged your man, Hutchins, yesterday, Cora. He was angry at you, but that is no affair of ours."

"Ours?"

"Oliver's and mine. For Oliver went to your house this evening and questioned him. You were up-stairs at the time, being dressed for this festivity. Hutchins, in his wrath against you, was prepared to disclose everything."

"Everything? What?" Her tone was husky, strangely unfamiliar.

"Why, this, Cora: That after you had left us, that evening, to go and sit with Isabel Ingram in her illness, you did not return at the time at which you afterward led us to believe you had returned."

"The malice of a discharged servant!" scoffed Lady Cora. The next instant a sharp snap was heard. She had broken, between fluttered and working fingers, her furred fan, costly with enamelings and jewelry.

Bianca went quietly on. "You returned a good hour before that time. Hutchins heard your carriage drive up to the door, and admitted you. Later he was surprised—I am not discussing the morality of his action—to discover that you had gone into the back apartment, behind that in which Oliver and I were seated. He stole to the door of this apartment and distinctly saw you listening near the fall of heavy tapestry. He may be a discharged servant, but his declaration is nevertheless both explanatory and convincing. It throws light on the theft—for I can use no other word—of Oliver Wraybourne's play. You afterward gave the essential points of this play to someone else. Gale became enamored of them; Leith Osmond was asked to make use of them. There, I have done, Cora. I only came here to find you and tell you of my great regret that one so near me in kinship could stoop to such an act of shame."

Bianca turned away, taking Oliver's arm. Soon afterward she left the ball, though many gathered about her and besought her to remain. Before she had startled society by going on the stage her following had been very distinctive. Later on, her good birth and her great professional

success had combined to keep secure the position she had formerly held. Lady Otway's abandonment of her had roused sympathy, and the subsequent disinheritance she was called on to face had won her new supporters while intensifying old friendly bonds.

"And so," Oliver found a chance to say before she quitted the ball, "you have had your wish, Bianca?"

"About Cora? Yes. I felt that I could not sleep to-night unless I had told her what you'd learned."

"This satisfies you, then?"

She turned on him with sparkling eyes. "Only in one way. I wanted to punish her by frightening her half to death. She deserves it."

"She deserves more."

"Never mind, Oliver. I wish to spare her public disgrace, if you mean that."

"I don't see how she can avoid it," Oliver said, stoutly. "You know very well that in fighting Gale I must disclose the full truth."

"But why must you fight Gale?" queried Bianca, with a startled air.

Oliver looked at her with a sort of dreamy suspicion stealing into his eyes. "I shall doubtless have to fight Leith Osmond as well."

"But—but—" hesitated Bianca, "I do so prefer that you should fight nobody. Cora is my first cousin, Oliver. The ties of blood are strong. In many ways I have not liked her, but we were brought up together; we have played together as children. And then I know so well what made her do it! She listened a little, and then listened more, with the impression growing and growing on her foolish mind that here would be a great part for Alan Crieff. She is dead in love with him, more's the pity. Besides, her nature is weak, vacillant. She's excusable for that one reason. I blame her, but I can't blame her as I would many another."

"And you expect of me—what, pray?"

"I expect from you pity," Bianca answered.

"Pity!"

"For my sake!" She met his kindling eyes with tenderest entreaty in her own. "Let it all pass, Oliver. Let them have the Wonderful Idea. You will write other plays; you're so marvelously inventive. Promise me that you'll say nothing—do nothing!"

"I will make no such promise, Bianca. And I deeply resent the quality of your counsel."

Her face hardened and saddened, both at once. "I see. As you please. I must have my carriage called and get my wrap. It's lucky they've all flocked to supper, so that we could have this thing out, fairly and squarely. Good-night."

She was moving away. "Bianca," he said, hurrying after her, "can you possibly ask of me this monstrous sacrifice?"

"I ask it no longer," she replied, pausing and half-turning. "Everything is over now. Do what you please. Cast an ugly smirch on my cousin for the rest of her days. Have me dragged into some odious legal wrangle. Only, don't speak a word more to me on the subject; don't speak—" she paused here for a second, her voice thinning and dropping—"don't speak a word more to me on any subject!"

"I won't!" said Oliver, his veins on fire with wrath.

Trembling, dazed, he soon afterward got himself out of the house. And this from Bianca Rotheroyd! It was worse than her kinswoman's treachery.

Over the huge expanse of Belgrave Square hung a great moon encompassed by glorious Alpine clouds. But for all Oliver Wraybourne heeded, the skies might have been inky and an east wind blowing drizzles of rain against his clenched lips.

XIII

"AFTER all," thought Bianca, on reaching home, "I *shall* have a sleepless night." It was dawn before she closed her eyes.

Long past her breakfast-time she

woke in sudden fear. Lying quite still, she endured one of those purgatorial half-hours that are the penalties we must pay for having hearts and brains above mediocrity.

Of course Oliver was furious. Were not men always like that? Sacrifices they considered things for women to make and themselves to avoid. It frightened Bianca to think of a future without him; since they had plighted troth she had not dreamed how hard such a future would be to shape. But the Wonderful Idea, for all its merit, must not be loved better than herself! That would never do. Nor should she appear before the world as one who fought her near relation for the commission of a treacherous robbery. Gale had been involved in more than one lawsuit before now. He had shown himself, at these times, pugnacious, tenacious, intrepid. She had had publicity enough, heaven knew; she did not want notoriety as well.

But while the day wore on she began to feel stings of conscience that no controlling effort could deaden. Had she not, after all, been cruel? He naturally cherished his fine invention—and how radiant and original it was! Because he hugged it close and would not give it up to mere brigandage, ought he to be blamed? And it was she who had dismissed him for his refusal. He had gone away at her command. Beyond doubt he was suffering now, and with great keenness; for she knew that he loved her. She might be jealous of his Wonderful Idea, but she was not jealous of it as if it were a woman.

Once she sat with pen poised over paper, ready to write him a note of gentle summons. But then pride whispered in her ear, and the pen fell from her fingers.

"Love wants all or nothing," came the still voice of her crafty counselor. "The sacrifice you asked would have seemed trifling to you if he had required it. Give way to him like this at so early an hour, put up with his refusal to rank you above his personal cravings for success, and your whole

life with him will be one series of surrenders, bankrupting dignity and begging self-respect."

Some people came to her in the afternoon. They seemed to her like shadows talking, and she seemed to herself like a shadow that talked. Later, when they had all gone, her prized old friend and teacher, Mrs. Barclay Boyd, appeared.

"My dear Bianca," said this lady, "you know what a London season means! I've been to eight stupid places where I was vastly bored, when suddenly I remembered that this was your day, and that by merely seeing you I should find consolation."

"Sweetest of friends!" Bianca smiled. She held Mrs. Boyd's hand while she pursued: "I'm so glad you didn't come earlier. *You* are not a shadow. Thank heaven for that!"

"Not a shadow! Great, masculine thing that I look! Are you making sport of me?"

"Far from it, as you're well aware." Bianca touched a bell. "Now you shall have the nicest, hottest cup of tea, and while you drink it I shall talk to you. I shall talk to you for an eternity."

She told everything. Then from her trusted but very astonished listener she asked advice. "Advice, I mean," she ended, "concerning *him*. Have I been too merciless? Or does his refusal of my plea for pity justify the course I took?"

Bianca, in this instance, addressed a most partial judge. Mrs. Barclay Boyd, a clever and brilliant woman, could see no wrong in her treasured pupil, of whom she was inordinately proud. She thought her the most beautiful girl in London, which may or may not have been true. But she also thought her character faultless as a perfect pearl; and firmly, with the fervor of partisanship, she now insisted that Oliver Wraybourne had behaved with shocking selfishness.

"Pledge me absolute secrecy about all that has happened," said Bianca; and when the vow was given and Mrs. Boyd had departed, she felt a new

strength of right in the demand she had imposed on Oliver.

That evening she was due at a large dinner, and who, of all men, should be seated next her but the "author" of the Wonderful Idea, in its "second version," Leith Osmond.

"I suppose you know," he soon announced to her, "that we began rehearsals to-day at the Duke of Cambridge's?"

"I didn't know," said Bianca, lifelessly. But already it was darting through her mind:

"So Oliver has made no attempt as yet to assert his claims!" Then, aloud: "Have you a good company?"

"Admirable. The chief woman's part seems to be in good hands. Anyway, Crieff and I have both formed that opinion."

"Who is she?" asked Bianca.

Osmond named a name with which his hearer was almost unfamiliar. She could ill repress a little bitter laugh. But she did repress it, and inquired:

"Was the young lady selected by Crieff?"

"Yes."

"I fancied as much. Woe betide her if she gathers too many laurels!"

"You think him selfish?"

"Boundlessly."

"Well," laughed Osmond, "you ought to know; you were with him long enough in the States to find out."

"I did find out."

Osmond seemed to reflect. "Then you think that only selfishness made him seek an engagement with your cousin?"

"With Cora Vallance?" came the sharp retort. "You don't mean they are really engaged?"

"Apparently not now. But until yesterday they were. Crieff announced to Gale and myself, just before rehearsal, that it was off. He had previously told us, quite a good time ago, that it had occurred. You should have seen Gale when he heard the news yesterday, my dear Miss Rotheroyd. He was racked with

wrath. I thought we should have to disperse the company and call it for another day. His lower lip flapped like an umbrella in a storm; his hands flapped, and his very feet also, as he savagely paced the stage. Can you guess why? He had the impudence to confess. Crieff's betrothal to a titled young lady, the daughter of an earl, he considered the most magnificent advertisement, and had been using it in the way of confidential disclosures for days past. Now, when its importance as a puff particularly appealed to him, he was called on to relinquish all further power of using it. I assure you he presented the most ludicrous sight. He was the parody of tragedy!"

"So like Gale! And how did it all end?"

"Oh, Crieff had to put his foot down with great firmness, and I, as author of the play, abetted him all I could." At this Osmond's voice softened, and across his genial, eager face a shadow of embarrassment was quickly drawn.

"I call myself author of the play," he went on, "but really I am no such thing. You know how I have wanted an idea—gone about begging for one, and generally made myself, on this subject, a peripatetic nuisance."

"Don't run yourself down too severely," said Bianca, who had always liked Osmond, "or I shall have to take up the cudgels against you and do battle with you in your own defense. Do you mean that the person who gave you the idea now refuses to let his name be used on the play-bill?"

"Precisely that!" Osmond exclaimed. "How clever you are at guessing!"

Bianca could indeed well understand Crieff's reluctance. He must be expecting any day, through the weeks that preceded the opening night, an injunction brought to bear on "The Temptation" by Oliver Wraybourne.

For herself, she passed the next fortnight in dismal semi-seclusion. She took walks and drives, but refused all festal gatherings. Now and

then Mrs. Barclay Boyd came to her. Once, during a chat, Bianca learned that Oliver had held a few minutes' talk with her former teacher at a crowded tea.

"He looked ill, my dear Bianca, positively ill. He asked me if I had seen you lately. I told him yes, with the sedatest air of innocence, and added what you had divulged to me last week. I mean about your intended trip abroad. 'She will go very soon,' I said, 'to some quiet place in France, and afterward will spend the Autumn in Austria. Thence she means to go into Italy for the entire Winter, not reappearing in England until some time next Spring.'"

"I suppose," said Bianca, with a sigh, "that he took your words very serenely."

"His eyes dulled, and a forced smile came to his lips—oh, *how* forced that smile seemed, and how utterly unlike him! But the next minute a wedge of women pushed us apart, and I saw him no more."

"When was this?" Bianca said, in lingering monotone.

"Only two days ago."

XIV

BIANCA now began to tell herself that the intention of Oliver looked fairly clear. He was going to let the Wonderful Idea come out in Leith Osmond's appareling of it, and follow up this action by their own perpetual severance. Woman-like, she tossed her head resentfully at the prospect of all this magnanimity in whose august shadow she herself should cut so small a figure. It often escaped her that if they never looked on each other again the separation would be one of her own requirement. Still, if he loved her in the right way, she kept affirming with true feminine wilfulness, he would be impelled to perform his deed of self-effacement with love for lenient prompter. But perhaps he did not mean to perform any such deed at all.

Perhaps he was already preparing for Crieff some specially destructive *coup*. Well, let it be this way or that, she would leave England for many months; her resolve was fixed. Already her maid, an elderly and very capable person, had received certain decisive orders. The newspapers were now publishing a statement that "The Temptation" would appear at the Duke of Cambridge's Theatre in the first week of July. This date was not far off. Bianca did not wish to be in London when the play was brought out. The authorship of it was given thus: "By Leith Osmond, with the Assistance of a Friend."

"Nice old Osmond," she mused; "he's honor itself. Crieff did not presume to permit the addition of his own name. But what would Osmond have done—what would he do now?—if he knew the real 'friend' whose 'assistance' he thus loyally disclosed?"

Thinking of her near departure, brooding over Mrs. Boyd's account of Oliver's changed appearance, she slowly felt a determination form and solidify. She was by no means like the agitated girl of fiction who tears up twenty sheets of note paper before she can content herself with the scripture on one. What she wanted to write was all in her head before she wrote it. Only two sentences long, it ran thus:

I believe that I am called on to thank you for a silent and very noble act of renunciation. I had no right to ask it of you, and now that I shall soon go away for quite a long while, I feel it my duty to acquaint you with my earnest gratitude.

B. R.

She had sealed and directed her little letter, and also placed a stamp on it, when suddenly, to her great astonishment, a card was given her. Rising from her desk in a momentary flutter of confusion, she handed, almost mechanically, the envelope to her servant.

"Have that posted immediately."

"Yes, miss."

"And, Atkins—" she was quite composed now—"please tell Lady Cora Vallance that I will see her at once."

When she saw her cousin it scarcely seemed as if the drooped, unstable figure and the dismally strained features could belong to Lady Cora at all. She was rather smartly dressed, however, and each item of her costume implied coquettish care.

"I've been wanting so to write you, Bianca," she flutteringly began, "but I hadn't the pluck. It's cost me a dreadful effort to come at last to see you. See you, do I say? Why, positively, I wondered when I found you'd let me in. I've been telling myself that you'd never let me in. And now that you have, dear, I'm *so* grateful!"

She dropped on one of the sofas with a hint of lessened if not vanishing timidity. Bianca simply replied that the wrong done had been done to another and not herself.

"Oh, I know it! I know it!" the visitor lamented, clasping her hands together—sheathed, by the way, in freshest and choicest lavender kid. "And I hear that 'another,' as you name him, has been marvelously generous."

"Who told you that, Cora?"

"Alan Crieff." Here followed a burst of eerie laughter, suddenly checked. "I'm supposed never to see him nowadays." Without the slightest warning Bianca's cousin burst into tears. "Oh," she began chokingly to whimper, "I may have been very sinful—I admit it—but my worst foe, if I had any, couldn't deny that I've met with piteous punishment. And what I did was done for *him*, Bianca! I'd have gone straight into the room where you and Oliver Wraybourne were seated that night if only it had not been for Alan. I erred for his sake; I stole for his sake. You—you can guess why."

"You loved him, Cora?"

"Yes, yes."

"He isn't worthy—" Bianca paused with precipitation. She had been going to say that he wasn't

worthy of even such a light and slight nature as her cousin's.

"Oh, I know he's weak as I am," Lady Cora struck in. "But that has no meaning with my poor, reasonless heart. I loved him before he went with you to America. He was then determined—I have had it again and again from his own lips—never to marry at all if he failed in winning *me*!"

Bianca merely nodded. She recollected Crieff's offer of marriage to herself, not so long ago, beneath occidental skies.

"But oh, Bianca, since I last saw you such a terribly tragic thing has happened! When you and Oliver Wraybourne left us there among the palms in Lady Trawle's bay-window, Alan became—deeply comforting. I went from the ball that night resolved more firmly than ever to marry him. But our parting was a solemn good-bye, since I intended to sail for Paris with mamma the next day. You and Oliver, to put it quite bluntly, had almost frightened me to death. Imagine my amazement when I found mamma sitting up for me in a wrapper long after midnight. If I had seen her walk into Lady Trawle's drawing-rooms I could hardly have been more astonished. You know what a social detriment it has been, Bianca, never to have mamma chaperon me since my coming-out year, and how I have been dependent ever since then on relations and friends. Indeed, Mrs. Arlington had taken me to Lady Trawle's and had just dropped me at my own door. I'm not a celebrity, dear Bianca, like you; I can't jump into my brougham with my maid and have my fame to act as guardian while I mount ducal and baronial staircases."

"Never mind that," said Bianca, a little curtly. "And you found your mother—?"

"Transformed beyond all recognition. I had left her with Mrs. Cavendish Olmstead at her bedside. You know what a depraved and degenerate gossip that woman is. Her trouble-brewings are notorious; but I've

always believed mamma too languid and anemic nowadays to dream that she would look and act as she did. But some old-rooted prejudice had been roused in her. She arraigned me with glaring eyes. And so I had dared to tolerate the addresses of a 'play-actor!'—that's what she called poor Alan! Oh, yes, she knew the Crieffs well enough, but why had not this one of them gone into the Army or the Church? Even Trade would be far better. She would never for an instant sanction my marriage with him. I knew how little money I had. If I didn't give her my most sacred promise there and then that I'd renounce Alan forever she'd summon her lawyers the next day. Of course I had to yield. She was too appalling; she made me think of a resurrection. And papa, as you know, *did* leave her nearly all his money outside the entailed estates, which went with the earldom to cousin Hubert. Then, too, I remembered how you'd been treated by Lady Otway—"

"Never mind Lady Otway, Cora. And so you're not going to marry Crieff?"

Lady Cora put a crease into the lap of her pretty frock and stared down at it.

"How can I, unless he makes a great lot of money?"

"And he believes he's going to—out of Oliver Wraybourne's play?" cuttingly inquired Bianca.

Her kinswoman almost rose from the sofa, then sank down again, plainly palpitating.

"Oh, he's superb, and the play's glorious, and Gale merely has a percentage, though a large one. I've been allowed to steal in and sit in obscurity at several of the rehearsals. Alan will hold by far the lion's share of the profits. He stipulated for that; he owns the play; he can discharge Gale after six months if so disposed. He's been very clever. He stands, I'm certain, to make enormously." Here Lady Cora's head, below the massed pink and white roses of its up-to-date hat, swayed

imploringly from side to side. "That is," she pursued, "provided Oliver Wraybourne doesn't put in any—any horrible, paralyzing claim. Oh, Bianca, do—do you really think he will?"

With more sadness than coldness, but distinctly with both, Bianca answered:

"I have not, pray believe me, the faintest idea."

XV

HARDLY five minutes had followed the departure of Lady Cora, when her cousin received a letter, the superscription of which she instantly recognized.

"He has written," she decided. "But it cannot be in answer to my letter. There has been too short a time for that. I see—our communications have crossed."

She opened Oliver's letter and read it swiftly through. Then she read it much more slowly, but with heated cheeks and flashing eyes. He told her that he had lately heard of her intended absence from England. Since receiving this intelligence he had concluded that perhaps it would be unfair to let her go uninformed regarding his intentions on the subject of a certain play now being rehearsed at a well-known theatre. He would place no impediment whatever in the way of its production. At first her own proposal that he should leave the affair uncontested had bitterly distressed him. It had indeed caused him extreme suffering, none the less poignant because of an egotistic sort. Authors are not wont to part with their offspring stoically; but there are reasons why they should seek to do so at times, just as there are reasons for myriads of other exceptional things in this mysterious world. He understood Bianca's desire to wrap the whole bad business in secrecy. That is, he understood it now; he had failed at first. Perhaps the light that had made all this clear to him was a fading one—the dying twilight of his

own happiness. For he would never be happy again without her. There were intervals when he felt that he could never achieve another fragment of dramatic work after the withdrawal of her great promised aid and sympathy. But this mood might pass—who could tell? Life was a sexton, always digging graves for dead hopes. And the mourners either partly forgot, or went mad, or died. He would try to be brave; and no matter what came, he would gain the consolation of having crushed self when such annihilation was needful and right. She must not doubt or be at all anxious hereafter. No lawsuit, no revelation of any kind would ever break for her that peace of mind which he devoutly trusted she might, through many future years, enjoy.

"And my poor little notelet," mused Bianca, "has made such a shabby showing beside this noble letter. Still, I'm glad the two crossed each other."

Quite soon she went to the well-remembered post-office and wrote Oliver a telegram. Under her veil she blushed as the girl behind the wire-work screen counted the words and took the fee. But after all, she told herself, while again going out into the sunshine, her message had been merely a summons, devoid of sentiment.

By late afternoon he came. They met as lovers meet, and the room was full of dusk when Bianca, briskly mirthful, exclaimed:

"Here we've been talking, talking, dear Oliver, till we've literally talked day into night."

"Well," said her companion, as she rose and rang for lights, "it certainly is less dissipated than talking night into day."

She paused before him, then bowed her head. Against his brow her cool lips felt like a rose.

"Dear Oliver, I thank you so much!"

"For giving up the play?"

"Yes. Oh, it must have cost you such pain!"

"But I have my reward." He rose

and strained her to his breast. "Everything is over now. I haven't a pang left. I'll show you my indifference on the first night, while they're shouting applause and having curtains rung up, and gladdening the soul of good, innocent, talented, deserving Osmond."

"The first night?" Bianca faltered. "Are you going?"

"We're going together. I'll get two stalls—or three, if you want Mrs. Barclay Boyd for a matron."

"No, no, Oliver. I can't go. I shouldn't dare to go, really. It would be an unbearable ordeal."

XVI

NEVERTHELESS, a fortnight later, Bianca nerved herself to go. Mrs. Boyd was their guest. The audience was early, as it always is on these important first nights, and to survey the stalls was to see half literary London in its most gala gear, besides a concourse of influential critics and a marked sprinkling of the fashionable idlers.

"There's Bianca Rotheroyd," said a feminine voice. "Isn't she too perfect?"

"Hush!" said a man's voice. "She'll hear you."

"I don't care if she does. Mr. Wraybourne's the luckiest man in London. For they *are* engaged, you know; there was some sort of quarrel, but it's quite made up. They say she was wild to appear in this play, but he wouldn't allow it; he was jealous, you know, of the Adonis-like Alan Crieff."

Bianca was glad to have the music begin, for she heard her name float from other directions, and knew that other lips were busy with it. After the curtain rose there was refreshment in being disturbed by so few late-comers. A pang went through Bianca's heart as she saw the beautiful garden scene of the first act. It was a pang of pity for the man at her side.

And yet he had assured her, again

and again, that all regret had perished. She believed him firmly, too; she could not help believing him, knowing his heart as she did.

Still, what of her own demand, so imperiously laid on him? To avoid public scandal was a natural enough desire. But did it not seem too cruel a defiance of justice that Lady Cora should go scot-free and the man who had lied at her bidding, and was lying still worse in his professions of love for her, should reap the reward of the Wonderful Idea?

A more attentive and good-humored audience could not well have been assembled. For fifteen or twenty minutes nobody fancied that there was anything in the least perilous with the play. Not till the middle of the first act did it dawn on fun-lovers that although there had been comedy presented they had not once laughed, nor on lovers of the serious that although some vivid emotional flashes had occurred no real thrill had resulted.

Toward the close of the act Mrs. Boyd whispered to Bianca: "What is the matter?"

"I don't know," she replied. "Everything appears to be wrong. Just see how puzzled Oliver looks."

There were three more acts. They were performed in what might almost be called dead silence. No one applauded; no one laughed. But, on the other hand, no one attempted to gey or to "boo." The piece moved along to its end with ponderous respectability. You thought of some stout and entirely moral sovereign at the head of a procession. You might consider the sovereign an awkward and somewhat doddering personage, but you felt disinclined to ridicule him, nevertheless.

The whole body of spectators, gallery gods included, was swayed, apparently, by one courteous impulse. All appeared, in some curious influence of *esprit de corps*, to appreciate the fact of a great thing having been tried for. There were those who afterward said that they seemed to see the play all the time as it might have

been, as it ought to have been, and kept wondering, in a tranced, eldritch way, why they kept seeing it as a restive struggle rather than a fine and calm accomplishment.

Less complete popular failures have ended in hisses. To-night, as somebody afterward stated, the whole throng quitted the theatre with an effect of leaving some church in which lay a form that must soon be buried. And somehow that form retained a certain majesty.

"I'm so glad," said Bianca, when seated in her brougham with Oliver and Mrs. Boyd, "that we escaped any aimless talks with people. For myself, I've no opinions, no views; I'm simply—befogged!" She leaned suddenly toward Oliver in the dimness of the carriage. "Oliver, *can* you account for it? Don't mind speaking frankly before our friend. She knows, as I told you; she's our only confidante, and trustworthy, of course, beyond words. I never broke my promise by telling her till I knew you would let me."

"Account for it?" Oliver slowly returned. "No; it defies me. It's a riddle of the Sphinx."

"You don't blame Osmond's workmanship?" asked Mrs. Boyd.

"No."

"You don't think," said Bianca, "that you could have put it all into more acceptable shape?"

"No. Leith Osmond's craftsmanship was better than mine would have been."

"Oh, Oliver!"

Early next morning Wraybourne came to Bianca. She had had all the more prominent journals brought to her. They were flung on the sofa in chaotic confusion, whence she rose to greet him.

With clasped hands they presently stood staring into one another's faces.

"Well," she exclaimed, "it *has* been a thunderbolt!"

"From the blue, yes."

"And the newspapers——"

"Are as dazed as we. They don't know how it happened, but they know

it did happen. On the whole, they have behaved with remarkable gentleness and restraint."

"Poor Leith Osmond!" sighed Bianca.

Oliver gravely nodded. "That is the enigmatic way of life. He, the most innocent, suffers the most harshly."

"But you, Oliver——"

"Oh, I've got my reward." And he kissed her on the lips.

"I can't pity Crieff much," Bianca went on. "And as for Cora—well, it seems as if destiny had taught her a blasting lesson!"

"Not at all," smiled Oliver. "These light natures float. She's no more in love with Crieff than I'm in love with her. She'll simply throw him over now, and it won't cost her a shiver. Next year the resurrected Lady Arrowcroft, if she doesn't subside again into her former apathy, will marry her to some impecunious person of high descent with the aid of a decent *dot*."

"How Gale will rage and fume over this!"

"Not a doubt of it. Who cares? Next year you'll find him airing a new star with a new play, losing or winning, going his old course. But of one thing be certain—he'll swear to the very man on the 'bus that he always felt shaky about 'The Temptation,' and was over-persuaded into bringing it out. I know Gale to the core. But in this respect he doesn't differ much from other managers. I'm not running down the race; they're a horribly worried set, and why not? It's thin ice with them always. They don't know the meaning of *terra firma*, and they're never sure into what hopeless hole they're skating."

With drooped eyes Bianca murmured: "Oh, Oliver, the Wonderful Idea went all to pieces! How was it? How could it possibly have happened? You know the electric effect it had on everyone who heard it mentioned. What sinister sorcery made it futile

on the stage? Have you decided? Have you reached any definite judgment?"

"No," Oliver said, thoughtfully. "I shall never be able to decide, Bianca; a century of meditation would not lead me to any definite judgment. There are some things that the foot-lights kill—that is all one knows. The experience of years will avail nothing in these lamentable cases. Wiser men than I have shrunk from the insoluble problem. Of course I do not refer to the cheaper efforts in mere dramatic artifice; yet even they have their margins of peril and risk."

Bianca half turned away, with glooming brows. "I will never concede," she cried, "that there was nothing in the Wonderful Idea—never!"

She felt an arm slip about her waist, and quickly afterward a voice was answering, close at her ear:

"There was much more than nothing in it, Bianca. First, it brought us actually together. Then it made us almost quarrel because you would not return to the stage and act in it. Then it won your consent to do so. Then it came near wrecking both our lives. Ah, truly, after all, it *has* been a Wonderful Idea! And now, finally, it has taught me the hollowness of playwright ambition and the exquisite charm of a home life shared peacefully with the woman I love!"

But Bianca, though keenly touched, gave her head a rebellious toss.

"No, no!" she dissented. "Your 'hollowness of playwright ambition' does not please me at all! I won't have it. As soon as we're married—mind, now—you must begin a new play. I'll darn your stockings, but *you* must begin a new play."

"I will," said Oliver, with a droll scowl. "I'll call it 'Paradise.'"

"Don't be too sure about your material," warned Bianca, "if you want to draw it accurately from life."

And then they laughed into each other's face with the sublime silliness of lovers.



AT THE ANTIQUARY'S

PROPRIETOR—Here is a Louis XIV. chair—the finest piece of old furniture in the shop. Napoleon sat in it, madam.

LADY (*incredulously*)—Indeed! And how do you know that?

PROPRIETOR—Ah, madam! why do we place credence in *any* delightful traditions? Why believe history? Why have faith in the Bible?

LADY—Will you guarantee that Napoleon sat in it?

PROPRIETOR—We will give a written guarantee to the purchaser to refund the money if it can be proven that Napoleon did *not* sit in it.

LADY—And the price?

PROPRIETOR—Only \$250.

LADY (*after a pause*)—It is very high.

PROPRIETOR—Yes, madam; but do you not find the backs of all antique chairs high?

LADY—I meant the price is high.

PROPRIETOR (*with feeling*)—I should hate to part with it for \$250. It cannot be duplicated. (*Opening the box seat.*) Observe the receptacle. Here you can keep a whisk-broom, and the furniture varnish, or hair-pins; none would be the wiser.

LADY (*sitting in the chair*)—It is very uncomfortable.

PROPRIETOR—There you are! It will last for years, as nobody will ever sit in it.

LADY (*considering*)—The price is very high. Had you said \$150 I should not have hesitated.

PROPRIETOR (*regretfully*)—It is a great sacrifice, madam, but as the public interest in Napoleon is not so intense as it was a few years ago, you may have the chair at that figure.

LADY (*hesitating*)—I should like to look round first.

PROPRIETOR (*sizing up his customer*)—Certainly, madam. This armor was worn by Sir Galahad. Complete, sound and triple nickel-plated. You clean it with tooth powder. You may have it for \$49.

LADY—These medieval things frighten me so. What is that fork?

PROPRIETOR (*losing patience*)—This fork is a prize, madam. Richard Brinsley Sheridan made his last toast on it.

LADY (*edging to the door*)—You don't say! You don't happen to have the toast for sale, I suppose?

PROPRIETOR—No, madam; he was hungry and ate it.

LADY (*opening the door*)—Thank you ever so much. I'll call again some day and look at the chair.

PROPRIETOR (*sarcastically*)—*Do*, madam. And remember, it is becoming more antique every minute. Good-day.

ROY MELBOURNE CHALMERS.



NOT HIS FIRST LOVE

SHE—I suppose you will commit suicide if I refuse you?

HE—That has been my custom.

THE COUNT OF MIRANDEL

By Clinton Scollard

S AID the Count of Mirandel,
"If it's truth that the Fathers tell,
(And who would question a priest?)
I am just as sure of Hell
As the Bishop is of his feast
When the long, lean Lent has ceased.
So, for a little leaven,
To ease my bed in Hell
I must filch somewhat of Heaven!"

At the mass he would not bow,
The Count of Mirandel;
And he stood with lifted brow
At the raising of the Host;
So the wrathful Bishop swore
By the Rood and the Holy Ghost,
And all of the saints as well,
He would brook the mien no more
Of the Count of Mirandel.

He was the doughtiest blade
That dwelt at the Bishop's court;
And you could not say his forte
Was the sword-thrust, or the dance,
Or the couching of a lance,
Or the witching way he played
The lute, or sang, or yet
The manner in which he made
Ballade and chansonette;
For he did them all so well
Each seemed the veriest sport
To the Count of Mirandel.

One deathless creed he had—
The passionate creed of Love;
And the shining text thereof
Was the Bishop's flower-like niece,
The Damoiselle Avise.
And, forsooth, his heart was sad
If the round of a day went by
When he might not feel the spell
Of the love-light of her eye;
And she—no tongue can tell
How she answered sigh for sigh
To the Count of Mirandel.

Now into the Bishop's brain
There had drifted never a gleam
Of the love that bound these twain,
Or their golden Summer dream
Had been closed by a dungeon-cell
Long, long before for the swain—
For the Count of Mirandel.

It chanced on the very day
When the angry Bishop swore
That the Count, with his scoffing way,
Should darken his court no more
(Despite his pressing needs
Of a man of fearless deeds),
Gossip, the prying dame,
To the Bishop's chamber came;
And if for the youth before
It had boded far from well,
Faith, now there was danger sore
For the Count of Mirandel!

Danger—it was no bar,
For he loved it next to Love!
He scented it afar,
Like the questing hawk the dove.
He could gaze upon its face
With a suave and steady smile;
He could meet it with a grace
That was cloak to a subtle wile.
He looked upon it now,
And his laugh rang like a bell;
There was no cloud on the brow
Of the Count of Mirandel!

There came grim guards to his room,
With halberd and helmet plume;
“In the Bishop's name!” they cried,
And entered. Naught but gloom,
And the casement open wide!
There was scurrying to and fro,
Clamor and torchlight's glow,
And the Bishop raged: “My niece,
The Damselle Avice,
Bid her be brought below;
She shall answer, mark me well,
For this monstrous, mad caprice—
For this Count of Mirandel!”

Fate laughs at Kings, 'tis said,
And it laughs at Bishops, too!
To the roof-tree's very lead
The women, a trembling crew,
Searched all of the palace through;
But they found no hair of the head

Of the flower-fair Damoiselle;
 And they told the Bishop dread—
 (There was nothing else to do,
 Though they shook as under a spell!)
 “We fear, your Grace, she has fled
 With the Count of Mirandel!”

*Said the Count of Mirandel,
 Sitting within his tower,
 To the lovely Damoiselle,
 At the shut of the sunset hour,
 “They had doomed my soul, Ma Belle
 (They who wield the rod,
 So they deem, of the great Lord God!),
 So, for a little leaven,
 To ease my path to Hell,
 I have filched somewhat of Heaven!”*



NO TIME TO LOSE

RIVERS—I just saw a man running off with your wife.
 BROOKS—He'd better run. She changes her mind every ten minutes.



NOT UNEASY ABOUT HIM

TOUGHNUT—The devil is always wide awake, my dear.
 HIS WIFE—Well, don't worry, John. He isn't losing any sleep over you.



NOT THE WAY HE PREFERRED

MISSIONARY (*handing man a tract to read*)—My good friend, are you
 prepared to die?
 HARDENED SINNER (*declining*)—Not that way, sir.



COULDN'T USE HIM

CHOLLY—So you think I am too slow for any use?
 SHE—Yes. You don't even make the other young men jealous.

WHAT HELL MIGHT BE

THERE was a woman—young, world-worn, selfish, floating on the swift stream of desire, never able to reach the smooth sea of satisfaction—until one day——

He came, and with him came once again melody in the notes of birds. A fragrance of incense overspread the earth and the flowers clothed themselves afresh in gay attire, while over all the sun poured down a rain of golden light so glorious, so dazzling that it blinded the woman, and with the man she sought the sweetness of shade found only in that valley which is invisible to the common eye. Out of the glare they went into a quiet spot touched tenderly by sun-fingers stretched down through leaves of ancient oaks, that spread their arms protectingly as if in benediction as the two walked in the shade on a carpet of blossom-studded green.

Life, to this man and woman, was a sweet, perfect thing.

He was a painter and his canvas glowed with colors that only love's brush may mix. He was pure of heart and soul, and he loved the woman. Under this gentle tutor her nature changed, softened, grew. She became gentle, firm, seeking to do good.

They looked into each other's eyes, and the woman said: "This is heaven," and the man replied: "This is heaven indeed."

Then the man was taken from the woman to do his appointed work in the unknown life beyond, saying to her: "Be patient; work and wait as I shall wait until we meet again, dear heart."

And the man passed and the woman did as he had bade her. She was patient, she worked, she waited. At times she sank into that fathomless depth of woe known only to the lonely of heart; then she would remember that *he was waiting for her*, and she was patient and worked again.

Years passed and the woman's golden hair silvered; the dark eyes that *he* had loved faded and closed in dreamless sleep. Greedily grasping the ferryman's hand, she, too, passed into the shadow land.

But he was not waiting for her! Ages, cycles she wandered far and far away through the unknown land, peering into each passing face, grasping flowing robes only to see strange faces; vainly calling his name aloud, and weeping, weeping, always weeping; never resting; ever seeking the love of her life.

At last she saw him. "Yes, it is he, my beloved!" she cried, holding out her arms to him.

He did not know her.

C. H. CRANE.
(Mrs. Stephen Crane.)



RECONDITE REASONING

BOBBY—Pa, what's a weapon?

PA—A weapon, my son, is something to fight with.

BOBBY—Is ma your weapon, pa?

THE AMBASSADOR'S BURGLAR

By Caroline Duer

CHARACTERS

COUNT SPINACHI *The Paphlagonian Ambassador*
MR. CONQUESTA *First Secretary of the Embassy*
COUNTESS SPINACHI *Wife of the Ambassador*
MISS CONSTANCE HARMSWORTH *A Young Lady*

A FOOTMAN

NEWPORT. *Small drawing-room in the house of Mr. Harmsworth, a widower with a charming daughter. The walls are hung with light brocaded silk, the furniture white, upholstered to match. There are growing plants in all corners, and flowers in vases wherever vases can be placed. Against the wall on the right, an essentially feminine writing desk, with silver writing materials and a confusion of letters and invitations. In the left wall, a door. At the back, in the centre, a long French window opening on a piazza well shaded with red awnings. In the middle of the room a low tea table, on each side of which, in comfortable wicker chairs, sit Miss Harmsworth—long, blonde, rose and white—and Mr. Conquesta—curly-haired, good-looking, in light gray.*

MISS HARMSWORTH *(leaning back in her chair, cup in hand)*

The worst thing about fathers, Mr. Conquesta, is that they're so insubordinate. Now, mine has just gone to town on business, in spite of my earnest solicitations, and here am I, left alone, horribly afraid of everything a woman ought to be afraid of—flattery, fire, gossip, ghosts, burglars—By the way, they say old Mrs. Scarebody's house was entered last night.

CONQUESTA

You don't say so! Was she in it?

MISS HARMSWORTH

Of course she was, in bed and asleep, and they went into her room and took some pins and rings and things that were on the dressing table—fortunately most of her jewelry was in the safe—but just think how horrible it would have been if she had waked up! I'm not at all courageous. I should have died of fright.

CONQUESTA

So should I, if I'd been the burglar and old Mrs. Scarebody had suddenly waked up.

MISS HARMSWORTH *(half-laughing)*

Don't be ridiculous. You know what I mean—and I really am an awful coward about such things. Do you know, they say this man left a basin of water, and a handkerchief folded like a gag, on the table in the hall. That looks as if he were very desperate, don't you think so?

CONQUESTA *(helping himself to cake)*

Well, I don't see anything very desperate about a basin of water.

MISS HARMSWORTH

Somebody suggested it was to wash his hands in case he had to—to murder anybody, you know—but don't let us talk about it any more or I sha'n't sleep to-night. Have some more tea, do, and tell me, did you enjoy lunching on the yacht to-day? I

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saw you far up in the bow talking away most earnestly to the wife of your respected chief.

CONQUESTA

And I saw *you* away off in the stern listening most flirtatiously to the conversation of my respected chief himself.

MISS HARMSWORTH

Count Spinachi was paying me compliments.

CONQUESTA

His humble secretary could do it a thousand times better.

MISS HARMSWORTH

He said he was coming in to see me, later.

CONQUESTA (*warmly*)

I am here already. You don't know how much I think of you. Just give me a chance.

MISS HARMSWORTH (*as the bell rings*)

But he's at the door.

CONQUESTA (*persuasively*)

He's got lots of work he ought to do at home. Don't see him.

MISS HARMSWORTH (*amused*)

Well, I really think I won't. It's almost too stimulating a thing to do twice in one day. Come. (*They get up and steal softly out on the piazza just as a footman opens the door and announces.*)

FOOTMAN

Count Spinachi! (*Count Spinachi enters. He is a tall, handsome, well-preserved man, perfectly dressed, suave, dexterous and flirtatious. The Footman, as he notices that the room is empty:*) I beg your pardon, sir, I quite thought Miss Harmsworth had come in. She must have gone out again.

THE COUNT

Very strange! I know she expected me. Will you have the kindness to go and make sure? (*Exit Footman.*) A charming young lady. Full of dignity and grace, and just the coloring I like—a complete contrast to Sophia.

All women are the same in essentials; how lucky for us that externally they differ so much. Imagine if they were all red-headed because they had all bad tempers, or that every one of them had green eyes because she was jealous! Now, the consistencies of a golden-haired Constance seem quite different to the consistencies of a dark-haired Sophia, and so we get variety of a sort, and we make the best of it—we make the best of it as experience dictates. (*Footman enters.*) Well?

FOOTMAN

I can't find Miss Harmsworth in the house, sir.

THE COUNT

No matter—I will stay a minute. Don't wait. (*Exit Footman.*) I know very well what it means, because I know very well woman-nature. She was particularly gracious to me this morning—very good—she thinks she must not be the same this afternoon. She is a flirt. It needed but that. I adore her. I will write a line. (*He goes to the desk and sits down to write.*) "You promised to be at home, mademoiselle, but you have forgotten your promise, and I go away disconsolate. A wise man expects nothing, because he dares hope for everything—in moderation. May I hope that you will honor with your beautiful presence a little dinner I am giving to the Archduke on the—" (*Breaks off.*) What day does Sophia leave me for Bar Harbor? (*Consults memorandum book.*) Ah, the 13th, always my lucky day! (*Writes.*) "—on the 13th at eight o'clock? Do not refuse." There! She must answer that. I flatter myself I write English with great facility. (*He rises and walks to the middle of the room, fitting his letter into a blank envelope. At this moment voices are heard on the piazza, and the Countess Spinachi enters through the French window, followed, rather sheepishly, by Miss Harmsworth and Mr. Conquesta. The Count quickly slips the letter, which he has not addressed, into his breast pocket, and picking up a book from the table, turns*

to meet them, exclaiming:) But this is entirely charming. You here also, my dear Sophia?

THE COUNTESS (*handsome, dark-haired, young, rather fierce*)

Indeed, yes—I send away the carriage and walk home by the cliffs from paying my last visit. And I espy these two young people sitting on the rocks, so sentimental. ‘Come in,’ I say, ‘and give me tea, or I expire. I have made my manners to some twenty front doors, I will now go in your back window and have rest.’ And you?

THE COUNT (*with dignity*)

I come to return this book to the charming lady who left it on the yacht to-day. (*He puts the book on the table again.*)

MISS HARMSWORTH (*coming forward*)

Count Spinachi is very kind and I am very careless. Let me see (*looks at title*), “A Hundred Ways to Cook a Goose.” It doesn’t say anything about the Gander—I must have picked it up by mistake. What tricks one’s mind plays one!

THE COUNT (*smiling acidly*)

And not one’s mind alone, mademoiselle.

THE COUNTESS (*innocently, to Mr. Conquesta*)

It takes always two to play tricks, I think.

CONQUESTA (*aside, making the best of it*)

It’s more of a game with four, though, and it seems to be your lead, madame.

MISS HARMSWORTH (*teapot in hand*)

You like your tea strong, Countess?

THE COUNTESS (*amiably*)

As it comes, dear. I take all as it comes. My husband, he thinks that I am hard to please, but it is not so. I suit myself without trouble. (*She sits down to the right of the tea table, and drawing the plate of cakes toward her makes a lazy selection of the best. Conquesta stands talking to her meanwhile. The Count declines tea,*

and tries to draw Miss Harmsworth toward the window.)

THE COUNT (*pointing to the view*)

My dear young lady, do not, I beseech you, turn the cold shoulder on such a beautiful ocean—or (*aside*) so devoted an admirer—especially at sunset.

MISS HARMSWORTH (*following him*)

There is very little sunset left, Count; it is only afterglow, I’m afraid. (*They stand at the window; he is evidently trying to persuade her to go out with him; she is laughingly refusing.*)

THE COUNTESS (*who is making tea for Conquesta*)

One lump or two? I always forget.

CONQUESTA

One, if you are going to be sweet to me, otherwise two. But I’ve had my tea.

THE COUNTESS

Never mind, you must take more now, for I have something to say to you, and you will need three lumps, for I am not inclined to be sweet. I am not pleased with you.

CONQUESTA (*with the weary air of one who knows already*)

Why?

THE COUNTESS (*whose methods are circuitous*)

Well, you were rather silly to-day, weren’t you?

CONQUESTA (*surprised, but ready*)

Silly? Oh, not more so than usual, was I? Let me see, we sat in the bow after luncheon, and I told you your eyes were— (*Breaks off and looks at her admiringly.*) And they are, too.

THE COUNTESS (*hastily*)

Oh, I do not mean that.

CONQUESTA

And then we walked about a little and I told you your hair was— And so it is, only more so with this red light on it.

THE COUNTESS (*laughing*)

Nonsense! I did not mean that, either.

CONQUESTA

Then what did you mean? Oh, I told you I was afraid I was getting too desperate about you.

THE COUNTESS

That is what I object to—because, you see, it isn't true.

CONQUESTA

But it might be at any minute.

THE COUNTESS (*firing her shot*)

Then why are you here?

CONQUESTA (*vaguely*)

Oh, don't let us borrow trouble—

THE COUNTESS (*interrupting, quickly*)

I will not have a divided homage. I am not one of these tame birds who pick up scattered crumbs! While you admire me you shall not admire my pretty friend here—nor any other woman, for that matter. Is it understood?

CONQUESTA (*kissing her hand*)

Fully and entirely. May I walk home with you? (*She nods and rises to get her gloves and parasol from a chair near the window. The Count and Miss Harmsworth move forward.*)

THE COUNT (*reproachfully*)

You meant to be out, then, made-moiselle? You give an elderly diplomat a great deal of trouble.

MISS HARMSWORTH (*laughing*)

And tax his inventive powers beyond their strength. Shall I read you some recipes from the book I left on the yacht? (*She picks up book.*) Your excuse for visiting me? "The domestic goose is rarely cooked for less than half an hour—"

THE COUNT (*interrupting, pompously*)

An excuse, my dear young lady, is sometimes an *indication* rather than a concealment of motive. But you mock me, I think! My charming companion of the morning is gone—I will go also. But the 13th?

You will not forget my humble petition? See! (*Taking letters from his breast-pocket and selecting one.*) I had written it when they told me you were not at home—I leave it as a reminder. (*He places it in the book, which she is holding open.*) A favorable answer is requested. The Archduke, like myself, will be desolated if you do not come. (*He bows; she smiles and is about to open the envelope when the Countess advances, both hands extended, to say good-bye. Miss Harmsworth drops the book, with the letter in it, on the table.*)

THE COUNTESS (*embracing her*)

Adieu, my dear Constance. I must go. I am a thousand times refreshed. Your tea is excellent.

MISS HARMSWORTH

Good-bye, dear Countess. It was so kind, etc. (*They talk apart.*)

THE COUNT (*to Conquesta, drawing him aside*)

A word with you, my dear fellow. We have finished translating the Prime Minister's letter. (*Takes letters out of breast-pocket and selects one.*) Here it is. Astounding! Most astonishing escapade on the part of the Archduke! I am anxious to know what you think of it. A nice excitement it would create here if this scandal about His Royal Highness got wind. (*He takes the letter out of the envelope to hand to Conquesta.*) Blessed heaven! What have I done? This is not it! This is the letter I have but now written to Miss Harmsworth—and the other!—the other I must have given to her by mistake. The story will all be known. But no, she did not open! It is yet time. We must recover it without attention called, if possible.

CONQUESTA

Why not tell her of the mistake and ask her for the letter?

THE COUNT (*uneasily*)

Call the attention of my wife to the fact that I have been writing to this young lady? You forget the eternal jealousy of women! Could you—er—

persuade the Countess to accept your escort home and leave me here?

CONQUESTA

Try my best, sir. (*He turns to the Countess.*) I am very much at your service, madame, whenever you are ready.

THE COUNTESS (*to Miss Harmsworth*)

Then it is all settled, dear; and I come back to-night. You shall not be left alone.

MISS HARMSWORTH

You are goodness itself. A thousand thanks. Good-bye. (*As the Countess and Conquesta are starting, the Footman announces:*)

FOOTMAN

A gentleman outside wishing to speak to Count Spinachi.

THE COUNT

To me? A gentleman?

FOOTMAN

Says he recognized your automobile, sir. Tall, dark gentleman.

THE COUNT

It must be the Archduke. Miss Harmsworth, pardon me. (*To Conquesta, as he passes him.*) Do not stir till I return. (*He goes out, followed by the Footman.*)

THE COUNTESS

Shall we start ourselves, monsieur?

CONQUESTA (*trying to gain time*)

Oh—I—er—are you sure you are rested?

THE COUNTESS (*puzzled*)

But certainly. And besides, dark night approaches.

CONQUESTA (*looking out of the window*)

Oh, not so very dark. We could wait a few minutes longer.

THE COUNTESS (*annoyed, tying her veil*)

At all events, I am ready.

CONQUESTA (*ingenuously*)

Your veil is not caught at the corner.

THE COUNTESS (*tearing it off*)

It is not necessary to wear one.

MISS HARMSWORTH (*courteously*)

I should think not, dear, with your complexion.

THE COUNTESS (*smiling at her*)

Always so charming. (*Frowning at him.*) So I go alone, with my complexion, Monsieur Conquesta.

CONQUESTA

No—no—not on any account. I—er—you—

THE COUNT (*entering, very much flurried*)

The Archduke begs that you will accept a seat in his automobile, Sophia. I must follow at once to the Embassy, where he has matters upon which he requires my advice. I trust he will not insist to race down Bellevue Avenue as he did yesterday. I take my reluctant leave, mademoiselle. *Allons*, my dear Sophia. (*Aside.*) Conquesta, remain! Do not leave without the letter. It is in that book. (*The Count goes out, the Countess also, but protesting.*)

MISS HARMSWORTH (*maliciously*)

Well, Mr. Conquesta?

CONQUESTA

Well, Miss Harmsworth. Alone at last.

MISS HARMSWORTH (*affecting to misunderstand*)

Oh, it wouldn't be polite to leave you alone. As long as you stay, I must.

CONQUESTA (*pathetically*)

Is that a hint? Because I can't go yet. I must ask you something—

MISS HARMSWORTH (*politely*)

Then pray sit down. (*She moves about the room, arranging the flowers, putting the writing table in order, changing the places of ornaments. Mr. Conquesta stretches out his hand toward the book. She sees him.*)

CONQUESTA (*lightly*)

Read anything new lately?

MISS HARMSWORTH (*astonished*)

Is that what you wanted to ask me?

CONQUESTA (*confused*)

Oh! No, no! That's just a side issue. By the way, may I look at the cook-book?

MISS HARMSWORTH (*laughing*)

Certainly not. I hate a man who takes an interest in eating.

CONQUESTA

I don't care a bit about eating, but I take an interest in general literature of all sorts.

MISS HARMSWORTH

Then you may satisfy your literary tastes at home. I am not accustomed to have people read when they pay me visits.

CONQUESTA (*abandoning diplomacy*)

You are quite right, too. It was beastly rude of me to suggest it. Miss Harmsworth, I must explain something.

MISS HARMSWORTH (*gently*)

So you said, and I am listening.

CONQUESTA (*desperately, getting up*)

My chief gave you a letter just now—it was a mistake—quite a different letter from the one he meant to leave. It is always best to be straightforward, isn't it? May I have it back?

MISS HARMSWORTH (*looking at him haughtily*)

Your chief's alarm is quite unnecessary. I should not have read it when I found it was not intended for me. (*She takes the letter out of the book, and tearing it into four pieces, throws it into scrap-basket. Then she rings the bell.*) You may tell Count Spinachi that his letter is destroyed. Good afternoon, Mr. Conquesta—yes (*to Footman, who enters*) I rang for lights.

CONQUESTA (*with a gesture of despair, as he goes*)

Ye gods! what a mess I've made of it!

Curtain.

SCENE II

The same. Night. The tea table is gone. The Countess Spinachi and Miss Harmsworth, in elaborate lace and light silk tea gowns, sit comfortably chatting together.

MISS HARMSWORTH

So good of you to come and spend the night with me, dear Countess!

THE COUNTESS (*languidly interrupting*)

Say "Sophia," dear.

MISS HARMSWORTH (*smiling*)

Then, Sophia, dear, I hope you will be comfortable, and that the burglars will not molest us.

THE COUNTESS (*patting her hand*)

I always make myself comfortable, and as for burglars, bah! (*Snaps her fingers.*) I care nothing for them. I come of a brave house. We fear not man or devil.

MISS HARMSWORTH

How nice to be courageous! Now I am afraid of a great many men and all devils, blue, black or red—to say nothing of any beast with horns, and any insect with a sting, or (*aside*) woman with a tongue.

THE COUNTESS (*sleepily*)

My dear, you must sit always hand and hand with fright, and (*yawning*) I can imagine more pleasant ways to spend one's time when one is young and pretty.

MISS HARMSWORTH (*rising*)

You are tired, Sophia; there is no use in trying to conceal it. And it is really late. Let me take you to your room, and then I will come back and tell them they may shut up the house.

THE COUNTESS (*also rising*)

Yes, truly I am tired, but the evening has flown on wings. There is no one whom we have not deliciously discussed. Tell me, Constance, (*with her hand on Miss Harmsworth's shoulder as they leave the room together*) what do you think of Conquesta? As diplomat, charming, of course; but as a man, a friend, a— (*The voices are*

lost as they disappear through the door.)

Short pause, then, stealing in from the piazza, through the long window comes Conquesta in evening dress, his soft felt hat in his hand, his overcoat on his arm, his eyes alert, his steps cautious.

CONQUESTA

That cursed sheet of paper! The Count won't rest till he gets it. I tell him it is torn up, but he says he *must* have the pieces. Where on earth did they put the scrap-basket? I thought those women would never go to bed. (He looks about the room; the basket has been moved to the further side of the desk.) I dined next door—I was the last guest to leave, and I have been waiting and watching about ever since. Ah! (seeing the basket) there it is! If only some confounded neat housemaid hasn't emptied it! No—by Jupiter! Good!

He stoops over the desk, resting one hand upon it; just as he is about to pick out the pieces of the letter a sound alarms him, and he springs back to the window, hiding, partly on the piazza, partly behind the curtain. The hand resting on the desk has involuntarily closed on Miss Harmsworth's long, silver-handled paper scissors, which he holds like a dagger. The door opens and Miss Harmsworth comes in.

MISS HARMSWORTH

It was very good in the Countess—Sophia, I mean—to put herself out to come and stay with me, but, on my word, I'm rather put out myself since she arrived. Make herself comfortable! I should say she did. And every servant in the house is busy attending to her endless demands. The butler is squeezing lemons for her lemonade, the footman is taking the bulldog to the stable because his snoring annoyed her, the housemaid is changing the red shades in her room for green ones, and *her* maid and *my* maid are undressing her. She is more trouble to put to bed than a houseful of children. There is no use in my going up. Nobody can

attend to me for hours—I shall read. (Much to the chagrin of Conquesta, she seats herself and takes up a book.) That absurd cookery-book again. It has served a great many purposes to-day, but it sha'n't serve me for "general literature," as Conquesta calls it! (Throws down book.) Conquesta! I rather think he is playing a double part. Never mind, my good friend, I have a little surprise for *you*. As for the Count—I do wonder what was in that letter. Some other woman's business, I suppose. Well, I have no desire to be mixed up with his horrid, elderly love affairs. I wonder (looks about) where they have put that scrap-basket. Of course one would not . . . look at anything . . . but it might be safer to tear the pieces smaller. . . . (Conquesta looks in at her persuasively, beseechingly, threateningly. He moves. She looks behind her uneasily.) I have a horrid feeling as if I were being watched. I wish we hadn't talked about burglars. The house ought to be shut up for the night, but I don't dare ring till Sophia has had that lemonade or the footman comes back from the stable. (Sighs.) Oh, dear! (The word "burglar" has given Conquesta an idea. He has been watching Miss Harmsworth; he now draws back into the darkness of the piazza, out of sight.) I wish I were brave, like Sophia. If I saw anything, I should faint at once. What's that? Oh! (She gives a stifled cry as Conquesta appears at the window. He has, with the big scissors, cut his soft hat into a mask for the upper part of his face. It has long slits for eyes, and is tied on by means of the hat-band. He has put on his overcoat, with the collar turned up, and kicked off his evening pumps. He presents a very fierce appearance. Miss Harmsworth stands motionless, gazing at him.)

CONQUESTA (in as rough a tone as he can manage)

Don't move!

MISS HARMSWORTH (breathlessly)

No.

CONQUESTA

Nor scream!

MISS HARMSWORTH (*loudly*)

No.

CONQUESTA

Nor look too closely at me.

MISS HARMSWORTH (*shutting her eyes*)

No.

CONQUESTA (*indignantly, aside*)

Why doesn't she faint? She said she would.

MISS HARMSWORTH (*aside*)

Somehow, when I don't see him, I'm not so frightened.

CONQUESTA (*striding noisily across the floor*)

If you do exactly as I tell you, I won't hurt you.

MISS HARMSWORTH (*meekly*)

Thank you. I suppose you are used to hurting people if they don't do as you say.

CONQUESTA (*significantly, approaching the desk on tiptoe*)

The wise ones give me no occasion.

MISS HARMSWORTH

And the foolish ones are all killed, I suppose. (*Aside.*) I wonder I'm not more frightened. (*Aloud.*) Have you been long in the business?CONQUESTA (*roughly*)

No.

MISS HARMSWORTH (*opening her eyes with a start*)

Why, your voice comes from quite another part of the room. I thought you were much nearer me. What can you possibly want at my writing desk? There's nothing valuable there.

CONQUESTA (*making a threatening step toward her*)The tighter you keep your eyes and mouth closed the better for you—I know what I want. (*Aside.*) But it's hard to get.MISS HARMSWORTH (*obediently shutting her eyes*)

Certainly—I suppose you're afraid

I shall recognize you. But I really don't expect ever to see you again, you know. At least I hope not. May I sit down?

CONQUESTA

Yes. (*He tries again to get to the desk.*)

MISS HARMSWORTH

Then please give me a chair, or I shall have to move. (*He pushes a chair toward her; she sits down.*)CONQUESTA (*standing near her*)You seem to be a brave lady. (*Aside.*) I ought to frighten her out of the room, or her senses, or something, but hang it! I don't know how.

MISS HARMSWORTH

Am I brave? It's a great surprise to me, I assure you. I thought I was an awful coward. But you are rather gentle for a burglar.

CONQUESTA (*aside*)I must be fiercer. (*Aloud.*) There, that will do! No more talk. Now just hand over the jewels you're wearing and I'll get on. (*Aside.*) I never saw her look so handsome! I wish I wasn't being a burglar.MISS HARMSWORTH (*protesting*)

But I'm not wearing any.

CONQUESTA (*seizing her hand*)Not even a ring? All young ladies wear rings. (*Aside.*) I wish I knew the history of one of hers. (*He half raises her hand.*)MISS HARMSWORTH (*struggling to release herself*)No—no—I assure you—I left my few poor things up-stairs, and I shouldn't advise you to go up after them. (*Suddenly laughing.*) If you do you'll be caught and impressed into the Countess's service.CONQUESTA (*taken by surprise, lets her go*)The Countess here! (*Recovering.*) Hasn't she some fine emeralds?

MISS HARMSWORTH

Yes. How did you know? But of course you would, would you not, in

the way of business? She hasn't them with her, though. It's a poor night for you, I'm afraid. What an awful risk you run, don't you? and very often for nothing! I shouldn't think it would pay.

CONQUESTA (*putting his hand on her shoulder*)

See here, are you making fun of me?

MISS HARMSWORTH (*rising suddenly*)

No, but by talking to you I've kept you here till help arrived. Thank heaven, I hear someone in the hall. Wilton, is that you? (*Conquesta makes a dash for the basket. The door flies open, and in rushes the Countess in her dressing gown.*)

THE COUNTESS

My dear Constance! Imagine! There is a bat in my room—the one thing I fear. (*Sees Conquesta.*) Ah, heaven! a burglar! (*She faints promptly. Miss Harmsworth rushes to support her. Conquesta, basket in hand, makes for the window. At the same instant the footman, coming up the piazza steps to shut the shutters, rushes in and intercepts him. The front-door bell rings frantically.*)

MISS HARMSWORTH (*seeing that the footman is embarrassed between his attention to the burglar and his duty to the bell*)

Don't let him go! Don't let him go!

CONQUESTA (*making violent effort to escape, and brandishing scissors*)

If you don't, I'll—I'll fire!

A noise from outside, as of doors dashed open and furniture upset. The Count enters, breathless with haste. He is in evening dress, but without a hat.

THE COUNT

It is all right! All right! I have it. It was in another pocket. I gave it to you not at all. We are saved, Conquesta. Where is Conquesta? What is this? I arrive in time most opportune to succor beauty in distress!

CONQUESTA (*tearing off his mask*)

On my word, sir, I hope the next time you hunt official documents you'll do your own burglarizing.

MISS HARMSWORTH (*motioning to Footman to let Conquesta go*)

It was you! But I don't understand. An official document! Why did not you explain it to me?

CONQUESTA (*slipping out of his overcoat*)

I thought I had, but it didn't seem to work very well this afternoon. Will you ever forgive me, Miss Harmsworth?

THE COUNTESS (*recovering, murmurs*)

Of a courageous family, but my nerves have been overstrained lately. Ah, Conquesta, I mean Ferdinando—(*She totters to the Count.*)

CONQUESTA (*approaching Miss Harmsworth*)

Most brave and beautiful lady (*he kisses her hand*) who wears no rings, (*he kisses it again*) I love you.

MISS HARMSWORTH (*laughing and curt-seying*)

You are too late, Mr. Conquesta. I have been engaged for some months. I announce it to-morrow.

(*A terrific explosion is heard without.*)

THE COUNT (*blandly*)

It is my automobile. I drive her too fast to prevent trouble.

Curtain.

A TIP IN TIME

HE—Do you know, I am fixing to fall in love with you.

SHE—Well, be careful. The man I marry will have to be pretty well fixed.

FAILURE

OH, long and dark the stairs I trod
With stumbling feet to find my God,

Gaining a foothold bit by bit,
Then slipping back and losing it,

Never progressing, striving still,
With weakening grasp and fainting will,

Bleeding to climb to God, while He
Serenely smiled, unnoting me.

Then came a certain time when I
Loosened my hold and fell thereby.

Down to the lowest step my fall,
As if I had not climbed at all.

And while I lay despairing there
I heard a footfall on the stair,

In the same path where I, dismayed,
Faltered and fell and lay afraid.

And lo! when hope had ceased to be,
My God came down the stairs to me.

THEODOSIA GARRISON.



A POWERFUL COMBINE

THE WIFE—I think this consolidation business is going a little too far.

THE HUSBAND—What's the trouble now?

“The cook is going to marry the janitor.”



DIDN'T DARE COMPLAIN

WILLIS—That fellow Henry Peck seems to be pretty well satisfied with himself.

WALLACE—He'd better be; his wife made him what he is.

KING EDWARD THE SEVENTH

By Stephen Fiske

AS the child's the father to the man, so is the Prince the father to the King. The magical transformation of Prince Hal into King Henry the Fourth will never be repeated. There is no necessity for King Edward to say to his former associates, as King Henry did:

Presume not that I am the thing I was:
For God doth know, so shall the world
perceive,
That I have turned away my former
self—
So will I those that kept me company!
When thou dost hear I am as I have
been,
Approach me, and thou shalt be as thou
wast,
The tutor and the feeder of my riots.
Till then I banish thee, on pain of
death—
As I have done the rest of my mis-
leaders—
Not to come near our person by ten
mile.

When the Prince of Wales visited America he was only nineteen years old, a fair, slender youth, his face very like that of his mother in her girlhood. The tour through the British colonies and the United States was part of the curriculum of his education as a sovereign. He was attended by the venerable Duke of Newcastle and the middle-aged Major-General Bruce, and they took pains to impress on him that he was under strict tutelage. At Ottawa, for example, General Bruce refused to allow the Prince to drink champagne during dinner; at Niagara Falls he was forbidden to take a ride, and a drive was substituted.

All of the Prince's suite except Major Teasdale were much older than he, and they acted as guardians rather than courtiers.

To facilitate the ceremonials in the new and democratic countries, the Prince traveled as Baron Renfrew. He must have been bored by the continuous performance of addresses, speeches and dinners, but he never appeared so. His relaxations from formalities were playing the piano and dancing. He played well—his mother and father were accomplished musicians—and the ladies told me that they would call his dancing divine even if he were not the Prince of Wales.

Imagine this quiet, golden-haired lad conducted by learned statesmen and astute politicians through Canada and the United States, speaking only what had been set down for him and with no opportunities for individual opinion or action. Yet his large eyes were always wide open, and he has more than once demonstrated that in all these years he has not forgotten persons or places that enlisted his youthful interest.

The Prince landed first at St. John's, Newfoundland, a quaint, gray, very French town, not foggy, but with a permanent belt of fog a few miles out at sea. American, English and French frigates thundered salutes and manned the yards. Pointing to them, the Prince said:

"See; our sailors stand like statues; the Americans are like pictures against the sky; but the French are like farmers, afraid they may fall off!"

The criticism was just, and even the townspeople applauded it. In

the evening there was a public ball, and the Prince danced alternately with the wives and daughters of the officials and of the fishermen. Such new dances as "the Lancers" were unknown in St. John's, and the Prince bustled about, directing bewildered couples and laughing with boyish fun at their blunders.

Newfoundland was the jolliest place that the Prince visited. As the tour proceeded and the functions became more ceremonious, he grew more reserved. On state occasions he wore the uniform of a British officer; ordinarily he was very plainly dressed. I rejoined the Royal party at Quebec, where the Prince's dancing partner, a local belle, tripped and dragged him to the floor with her.

"*Hon! soit qui mal y pense!*" exclaimed the Duke of Newcastle.

The Prince frowned and assisted his partner to a chair. But he had made a mental note of the apt saying, and a few months afterward the Duke received the Order of the Garter.

At Montreal a concert was given in honor of the Prince. While I was in the foyer a little, black-eyed, black-haired, melanine, gypsyish girl in yellow satin pantalettes ran up to me and cried:

"Please, may I have something to eat? I am so hungry."

As I led her to the buffet Maurice Strakosch interposed. The hungry child was Adelina Patti, and she could not have anything to eat until after she had sung before the Prince of Wales. So she was led off, crying, and alas! the Prince, fagged out by his long journeying, left the concert before her turn came to sing. To him, as to the general public, the name of Patti meant nothing phenomenal then. But when Patti went to England in the first flush of her fame, the story of her girlish disappointment at Montreal was brought to the Prince's attention, and he did everything possible to add to her celebrity, becoming more than her patron—her sincere friend and adviser.

Irish politics had been transferred bodily to Canada, and during the trip

from Montreal to Ottawa the Prince was brought face to face with Orangism and its opponents. There was wild talk of blowing up the boat that conveyed the Royal party; stones were thrown; a riot seemed imminent, and orders were given to steam away quietly in the night. When, at Niagara, the Prince saw Blondin cross over the rapids on a tight-rope he must have been reminded that the Canadian officials were accomplishing a more difficult feat in keeping order among such hostile elements, and we may be sure that the lesson will not be lost on the King when he deals with Irish questions.

With this exception—an Orange blot on an otherwise perfect tour—I found no difference between the reception of the Prince in Canada and the United States. The same crowds gathered to catch a glimpse of him. The same sort of women pushed into the hotels to bottle up the water in which he was supposed to have washed his hands—generally mistaking the room or the wash-basin. The same curiosity-seekers begged leave to handle his baggage. The same well-dressed and apparently well-bred women kissed the leather cases that contained his—or somebody else's—clothing. It was a novelty then to have a separate dressing case for each suit of clothes, and the temptation to hand out the wrong portmanteaux was irresistible.

By this time everybody knew that the Prince was very fond of dancing, so that every American city at which he stopped gave him a ball. In New York the ball was at the old Academy of Music, and the crowd was so great that a portion of the dancing floor gave way and several persons were pushed into the parquet below. The Prince was not near the scene of the accident, but he immediately came forward and asked anxiously if anybody was hurt. There were no injuries; the stage carpenters rapidly replaced the flooring; the Prince clapped his hands for the music to resume, and in a few moments the crowd was dancing as merrily as before. The

Prince would not concede that any omen of his American visit was bad.

Manager Sanderson, of the New York Hotel, was the caterer for the Royal party during their journeys on this side of the Canadian line. The Prince was so pleased that he urged Sanderson to go to London. The result was the establishment of the Langham Hotel, still a noted hostelry, although Sanderson has been dead for some years. Moreover, the Prince showed special kindness in introducing to London a brother of Sanderson, an American pianist and composer.

The tact with which the tour was conducted was evident at Richmond, Va. The Prince attended divine service there, and the congregation stood on the pew seats to see him; but the visit was very brief. Whether because the sight of human slavery was offensive to Englishmen, or because there were already mutterings of the tremendous Civil War that broke out a year later, the Royal party was hurried away from the Southern capital with what seemed to the uninitiated undue haste.

An historic incident was the visit of the Prince to the tomb of Washington. The artist who could adequately depict the future King, surrounded by his brilliant suite, bare-headed in homage to the Father of the Republic, would be immortal. But the remark of the Duke of Newcastle to the Prince, as they turned away from the tomb, should be historic also.

"You know," said Newcastle, "that General Washington was an Englishman."

After many days of railway travel and numerous receptions and balls, it was a blessed relief to have a few hours' shooting on the prairie around Dwight's Station, Ill. When we stopped for luncheon, bags were counted and wagers made. Luncheon over, everyone pulled out a pipe or a cigar and began to look for a match. There was but one match in

the whole party, and the lucky man who had it refused to assume the responsibility of lighting it.

"What if it should go out?" he explained. "You would all say that it was my fault, and would never forgive me."

"Let's draw lots who shall light it," proposed one of the dozen men yearning for a smoke.

The proposal was accepted. The men began pulling up blades of prairie grass for the lots—the man who drew the shortest blade to light the match. Others took off their coats to use as screens against the wind. Each one knew that he would be abused if the match missed fire. Then the Prince smiled and said:

"Give me the match, please."

'Twas a kindly thought. It relieved us all from a dilemma—as no one could find fault with the Prince. I am happy to add that the action had its reward, for the match burned loyally and every smoker got a light.

Seven years after this scene of Princely consideration on the prairie I arrived in England on the yacht *Henrietta*, the winner of the first ocean yacht race. The kindness that the Prince of Wales had shown to Americans ever since his visit here was evident from the moment we landed. At his suggestion an informal reception by Queen Victoria at Cowes was immediately arranged. In London every social courtesy was offered. The Duke of Edinburgh was then the Sailor Prince of England, and to him I was commissioned by Mr. James Gordon Bennett to offer the winning yacht as a present; but it was an open secret that a grateful sentiment toward the Prince of Wales had inspired the generous gift, as if to say:

"Well, if the Prince cannot accept the boat, it shall be given to his brother."

During my stay in London the Prince was a frequent visitor to the St. James Theatre, only a stone's throw from Marlborough House, where he then resided. What had

been the kitchen of Mr. Alfred Wigan's house, adjoining the theatre, had been turned into a Royal reception-room, with crimson velvet hangings. The Prince used to push aside the hangings and disclose the kitchen faucets, and tell his suite how he amused himself by turning on the water in Wigan's time.

Mrs. John Wood, a favorite actress in both America and England—retired, but not forgotten—was playing the heroine in John Brougham's burlesque, "*Pocahontas*," rechristened "*La Belle Sauvage*," and the Prince sent for her to receive his congratulations after the performance.

Brilliantly beautiful in the rich costume of the Indian Princess, attended by the chief braves of her court and guarded by an escort of picked savages, Mrs. Wood entered the reception-room with an air of Royalty paying a visit to Royalty. The Prince kissed her hand fraternally, and taking his cue at once, presented her to his suite as "Her Royal Highness the Princess Pocahontas, of Virginia."

Old playgoers may remember that "The Little, Wee Dog" song was one of the hits in "*La Belle Sauvage*." The Czarevitch (now the Czar) was the guest of the Prince at the St. James, and was asked whether he had ever visited that theatre before.

"Oh, yes," replied the Czarevitch, and humped his shoulders, swayed back and forth and hummed "The Little, Wee Dog" tune. In this attitude he seemed so comically ursine that the Prince pointed to his reflection in a mirror and said:

"You look like a bear!"

"Certainly—a Russian bear!" laughed the Czarevitch.

The Princess of Wales, now Queen Alexandra, was so fond of the French play "*Fernande*" that she went six times to see it, and at last persuaded the Prince to accompany her. The opening scenes must have appeared dull to him, for he lingered long in the reception-room, smoking his after-dinner cigars. As what was called "the great scene" in the third act, be-

tween Mrs. Herman Vezin and Mrs. John Wood, was about to begin the Princess sent for me and said:

"Please to ask His Royal Highness to come to the box at once. Say that I wish him to see the end of this act."

At the door of the reception-room I knocked discreetly and then pushed aside the portière. The Prince was describing to his suite how he had killed a stag in Scotland. It was an extraordinarily large and very wild stag, and had to be hunted long and warily. But at last it was brought to bay, and stood like a bronze figure against the brown moors. The Prince, still cautious, still anxious to make certain of his first shot, crept slowly toward it. Up went the stag's proud head, and simultaneously the Prince raised his gun, took steady aim—and saw me standing in the doorway.

In reply to his mute inquiry I repeated the message of the Princess.

"I will come with you," said the Prince, throwing away his cigar, taking up his hat and leading the way to the Royal box, leaving his story unfinished, the stag unhurt and the suite to follow as they pleased.

Anyone who has tried to shoot a stag or tell a story knows what superb self-abnegation was shown in this prompt compliance with the request of the Princess.

From boyhood the Prince had the Guelph characteristic of always remembering every face and name, no matter how diverse the environments. Depending on this, I wrote to him in regard to a fund that was being raised to build and endow a Home for Freemasons. Knowing the innumerable demands on the Royal purse, I asked for no contribution, but requested that entertainments given by English actors for the benefit of the fund might be announced as under the patronage of the Prince of Wales. In a fortnight came a reply, granting the official patronage—of which English professionals think more than Americans can appreciate—and adding most cordial words of sympathy and encouragement.

Several profitable entertainments were given under the ægis of the Prince's name, and when the fund was complete and the Home opened, the Grand Lodge ordered two gold medals to be struck—one for the Prince of Wales, Grand Master of the Freemasons of England, and the other for Grand Master Lawrence, of New York.

"A man and a Mason" is a grand old formula, and it befits a monarch who can say with another Prince of

Wales who became King Edward the Fourth:

Now am I seated as my soul delights,
Having my country's peace and brothers' loves.

And now what rests but that we spend
the time

With stately triumphs, mirthful, merry shows,

Such as befit the pleasure of the Court?
Sound, drums and trumpets! Farewell,
sour annoy!

For here, I hope, begins our lasting joy.



LASSITUDE

THE storm is over! Tears and cries are stilled;
The baffled heart refuses to be stirred,
And on the lip the last complaint is killed
That for a moment fluttered to be heard.
The fainting words half-spoken, too, have died,
Stifled at birth and choked in travail's pain.
The soul is silent; dumb are hate and pride,
Nor one jot's fierceness of their past retain.
Anger, with frightened eyes and broken wing,
Feebly puts forth a pulse of shuddering breath,
Then falls, a shattered and a broken thing,
Dropping pale pinions at the feet of death.
Speak nor of joy nor justice, hope nor scheme,
Only of sleep!—a sleep devoid of dream.

JULIEN GORDON.



CAUSED THE TROUBLE

BROOKS—Did whiskey lead him astray?

CROOKS—Well, yes; his wife married him to reform him.



MISCONSTRUED

THE ARTIST—Do you paint?

MRS. WITHERS—No, not to speak of.

"Oh, I didn't mean that."

TO ONE GOD

FORGIVE me, Love, for this my strength,
 Forgive me that I was not weak,
 But hid the while in lying eyes
 That answer his would seek,
 And held in leash the tears lest they
 Too plain might speak.

Forgive me, Love, for this my strength,
 Forgive the hands that wrenched them free
 What time they fain had closed in his;
 Forgive the mouth of me
 That mocked, afraid, lest it might smile
 Too tenderly.

Forgive me, Love, for this my strength,
 That gave me power to so defy
 The break of heart, the brine of tears.
 Oh, God, most sweet, most high,
 This day I have denied Thy name—
 Forgive the lie!

McCREA PICKERING.



AMIALE ADVICE

HE—It was hard work to keep from kissing you last night.
 SHE—Well, you must be careful not to over-exert yourself, Jack.



AN EXCEPTION

THERE'S poetry in earth and air,
 In changing sky, in rolling sea,
 In all we look at everywhere;
 There's poetry in you and me.

There's poetry in birds that sing,
 In Summer landscapes, Winter scenes;
 There's poetry in everything—
 But how about the magazines?

DOROTHY DORR.

THE SENSATION OF THE ARCHDUCHESS

By Prince Vladimir Vaniatsky

IT was in the time when the Quartier Latin still produced genius, so you see it was quite a time ago. However, Harvey Blair, who was an American, had so much talent that he was never spoken of as a genius. He lived two floors above the Russian, Ivan Euxine, who was a writer of decadent verse, a friend of Paul Verlaine and a bowing acquaintance of François Coppée.

Euxine had come into the Quartier from the Boulevard Haussmann, where his married sister gave dinners and receptions to all the people in Paris who were worth knowing and some who were not worth knowing. Euxine, whose verse was not so bad that it could be printed, thought that the Muse might be better served by living in a garret in the Quartier. In accordance with this idea he took two rooms on the fourth floor of the lodging-house where Harvey lived. When he had fitted up his new abode with an endless variety of Eastern stuffs, Russian samovars and other ornamental things, he gave an invitation to the whole colony of artists in the lodging-house to spend the evening with him. He couldn't very well send formal written invitations, so he told the *concierge* to tell all in the house that they were to sup with him on the designated evening.

They came. They brought their friends from other parts of the Quartier. Some introduced themselves to Euxine first, and some first tried conclusions with the buffet supper. Among the latter was the American, Harvey Blair. After duly appreciating the good things of the repast and taking more than his share of

champagne, Blair went to the host of the evening, who knew so little about the Quartier that he actually wore evening clothes.

"I have enjoyed myself quite a little," he said. Euxine bowed. "You must visit me sometime soon and take dinner with me. I occupy the palatial apartments on the sixth floor."

As Blair said this those who heard him laughed loudly.

The following morning's gossip was principally of the newcomer, "the mad Russian," as they called him. Blair disagreed as to Euxine's madness. "He gave me the first good supper I've had since the first of the month," he said—it was near the end of the month—"and I'm duly thankful therefor."

A week later Blair entered the Russian's rooms and gravely announced that he had come to pay his supper call. He made a most formal visit. After him came the other guests, each dignified and formal, though in their hearts dearly enjoying the fun as they watched the mystified Russian. He had heard of the freedom of the Quartier, yet here were the students following the customs of the Boulevards.

It was Blair who was the ring-leader, and it was Blair who first broke the spell and showed Euxine what a real supper in the Quartier was. A few chosen friends assembled in the big bare room that served the American as both studio and bed-chamber. The menu consisted of cheese and cheap claret, and beer for those that liked it; also some crackers and a few long loaves of bread, which

were cut with a palette knife and devoured with the cheese.

After this Blair became great friends with the Russian. The artist spent most of his time, when not at work on his canvases, in the Russian's rooms. He shared Euxine's money with a brotherly freedom that delighted the Russian, whose money supply was large.

On a delightful day the two friends were in Harvey's studio. The artist was developing a "pot-boiler"—a landscape that existed only in his fertile brain. Euxine lay on the floor, smoking, and wrapped in a white burnoose that was no longer very white.

A knock—a timid, shrinking knock—came on the door. The indolent Russian on the floor drew a rug over him to serve as additional attire. Blair went to the door and gravely opened it. To his surprise, a tall, slender girl stood there.

"I am seeking M'sieu Blair—Harvé Blair," she said.

Harvey bowed profoundly.

"I am Harvey Blair," he said.

Euxine dived behind the screen that was kept for the benefit of models. Then Blair bade the girl enter.

"Do you wish for a model, m'sieu?" she asked, looking shamefacedly at the floor.

"No," he answered; "we have professional models."

She stamped her foot in a pretty, imperious way.

"But I want you to paint me. I wish to have my painting hang in the Salon this year."

"The Salon! You come to the wrong place if you wish your picture in the Salon. I do not hope for that recognition."

"But—but it will come, surely. I have seen your 'Dinæ,' and I know that you can paint better than anyone else."

She had remained standing, though Blair had proffered her a chair. He observed her closely. She was tall—almost as tall as he. Her features were irregular, but most charming in

their irregularity. Her mouth was small, full and daintily red. Her eyes were brown, with perfectly arched brows. Her golden-brown hair was parted in the middle and fell away in rippling masses to her small and dainty ears. She laid her hand on his arm.

"Please!" she pleaded.

For a second a refusal trembled on his lips, and then he said:

"Yes."

"When may I come?" she inquired, with the breathless pleasure of a child.

"A week from to-day, early—say at ten."

"Oh, I thank you!" she said, and smilingly departed.

A few minutes later, Euxine, again attired as a dandy of the Bois, entered the room. He had slipped out through a door behind the screen and had dressed in haste. He noted that the girl had gone.

"I'm going out on business," he said, and started for the door.

"Then go by the store and get me some paints," said Blair, and took so long to think up the list of what he needed that Euxine was quite cross, knowing it was then impossible to follow the fair visitor.

But by the time he returned to the studio he had quite forgotten his disappointment. Bits of rhyme were running through his head. He was about to write a "Lay of Windy Weather."

Blair did not desire Euxine to meet his mysterious and charming new model. The Russian, while one of the best fellows in the world, was a confirmed flirt. So Blair spent the most of Wednesday planning to get Euxine out of the way at the time of the unknown's arrival. It required much scheming and many diplomatic untruths to send the Russian off to a remote corner of the city on the following morning, hunting for a bookstore that never existed, where he had been told he could secure a "tall" copy of an Aldine for almost a song.

With the first gray streaks of Thursday's dawn Blair was awake. His

night had been spent in nervous dreams, in which the sweet, childlike face of his sitter appeared more than once. It was after nine o'clock when the indolent and carefully dressed Russian departed in search of his rare book. Hardly half an hour had elapsed when the girl came. She was dressed simply, as she had been on the occasion of her first visit, and the quiet, soft gray of her gown made an ideal color combination.

"You were waiting for me? How kind!" she said, as he held out his hand in greeting to her.

"I was waiting, fearing that you would not come," he answered.

"Truly?" and she laughed with the spontaneous and charming laughter of girlhood.

"Yes, truly," he answered.

"Why?" she asked.

"Because I am superstitious," he said. "I feel that if I paint your portrait, it will, as you have said, hang in the year's Salon, and that it will bring me fame."

She laughed again. "Yes, it will bring you fame, I promise you that."

When the sitting came to an end—he was painting her in the simple gray gown she wore—he begged the privilege of escorting her to her home.

"My old nurse is waiting for me at the *concièrge's*," she said. "I thank you. Good-bye."

He knew nothing of his visitor save that her name was Valérie. She would tell him that and no more. There was something mysterious about her, something that baffled him. She had the artless graces and pretty mannerisms of a girl, yet sometimes, unawares, bitter and cynical remarks fell from her lips.

One sitting succeeded another, and the painting progressed rapidly. Their meetings developed into an orthodox story, for the painter loved his sitter. She, too, seemed to care for him. They never spoke of love—they acted it, which is a much daintier, more subtle manner of expression. She had a fondness for posing before a mirror and studying the expressions of her mobile face.

But she must have him looking over her shoulder. Then she would make *moues* at him, and even throw kisses to him—in the glass.

It was not until the picture was finished that Euxine saw it. The occasion was a visit to his rooms of his married sister, Mme. du Breçon. She was quite charmed with what her brother told her of the American artist. She needs must see this artist's studio. Blair was absent on a trip to Barbison for two or three days, and Euxine had the key of his big, bare room. Mme. du Breçon begged, threatened, and then commanded; changed her tactics to promises and cajolings, and was at last taken up two flights and ushered into the room. She it was who found the covered canvas placed in a dark corner where no one but a woman would think to look for anything, and it was she who drew the cover aside. Then she stood silent, for being a bit of a dilettante in art, she could appreciate the work before her.

"It is for the Salon," said Euxine, looking at it with eager eyes.

His sister smiled; a thought had come to her. She would be the patroness of art; she would first introduce this new lion from her drawing-room. She was so excited by her plan that she bade a hasty farewell to her brother and rushed back to the Boulevard. As a result, a pleasing little perfumed note went from her home on the Boulevard Haussmann to a domicile in the Rue Vignon, where a member of the Hanging Committee of the Salon abode. This worthy, who had social ambitions, was quite flattered by the receipt of the note, and hastened to accept the dinner invitation—for it was no less—for the following Sunday night. He came, he smiled, he was conquered. Before he had left, the Russian woman had extorted a promise from him that M. Blair's portrait of "Valérie" should secure a good place in the Salon. Mme. du Breçon was so happy in this new diversion that she quite forgot for full three days to bring her little dog his usual box of chocolates.

When Harvey Blair was notified that his portrait of "Valérie" was to be hung in the Salon he was dazed. He had confidently sent pictures to the Salon for four years, and had been surprised that they were rejected. Now that one was accepted, he was equally astonished. But he remembered his superstition that this picture was the one destined to bring him luck. So he smiled and told no one; it was his intention to let his brother artists find out the wonderful news for themselves.

When the Salon opened there was another surprise. "Valérie" was hung in one of the most desirable places. But that was comparatively nothing, for the rumor spread, and the papers took it up that the portrait of "Valérie" was that of the Archduchess Valérie of Austria.

Then rose the cry: How did this unknown American artist come to paint the portrait of an Austrian Archduchess? How could he have painted the portrait, with the Archduchess in Austria while he was in Paris? Her presence incognita was, of course, suggested, and was accepted as a plausible explanation. But how could the Archduchess be in Paris and the fact not be known? Vienna telegraphed denials, and said that Valérie had never crossed the Austrian border. But Paris smiled cynically. "Of course, one would not expect them to admit it," Paris said, "but of a certainty it is the Archduchess. Is she not the same, even to her habit of wearing a simple gray dress? And then she undoubtedly has the grand passion for the American, is it not so? And one could not expect the Austrians to admit that such was the case."

While thousands crowded to the Salon for the purpose of seeing the portrait, Blair stayed in his attic room in the Quartier, denying himself to everyone. His morose mood intensified as the days went by. He knew not what to do. He loved the woman whose fair face and delicate figure he had perpetuated on canvas. Yet through his work she had been dis-

honored in the eyes of the world. They said that she, who he knew was pure, had been consumed with a passion for him, and that was how he had come to paint her. But his sorrow that her name should be defiled was nothing to the bitterness of losing her. His sentiment for her increased immeasurably by reason of his loss. In despair he vowed to himself to renounce the world and to devote his future life to painting religious compositions. In this mood he saw himself glorified into a modern Titian. He at once began work on a Transfiguration.

It was while he was thus engaged that there came a timid knock at his door. The knock was so like that with which Valérie had been wont to claim admittance that he opened the door in some perturbation. It was Valérie! He bowed low, but did not offer to let her enter.

"Let me in, please," she said, softly, with an adorable pout. He drew back and permitted her to pass. Then he closed the door. The closing of the door shut him away from the world, and with him shut her in, too. He went to her, took her in his arms and kissed her. What mattered it that she was an Archduchess of Austria? He would have her kisses on his lips to enable him to bear his renunciation. She laughed softly. Her arm stole up round his neck.

"The picture has brought you fame," she said.

"But the cost to me, the misery of losing your love—what is that to fame?"

"Losing my love?" She put her head to one side and surveyed him with a whimsical smile. "You haven't lost it yet," she said.

"Do you mean to say that you are not Valérie?"

"Yes, I'm Valérie." She sat for a moment, laughing. Then, with the most demure smile in the world, she said: "But not *the* Valérie. I'm only a singer in a *chantant*, called Valérie Yponse."

"Valérie Yponse!" Blair repeated.

"Yes, the same. Now I'll confess.

Over a year ago I saw a photograph of the Archduchess, and was so struck by the resemblance to myself that I went to work to cultivate it. Then I thought what a wonderful advertisement for me it would be if I could get some artist to paint my picture and exhibit it with just the name—Valérie. I knew what the sensation would be, and then what the sensation would be when they found out who 'Valérie' really was. An Austrian girl at the *chantant* told me that the real Valérie was very fond of soft, gray gowns. So now, my big artist, don't you see why you haven't lost my love?" and she gave him an affectionate pat on the cheek.

"From the wiles and trickeries of women, good Lord, deliver us!" said

Blair. Then he kissed her again, and together they went out to spread the sensation that the *chantant* singer's picture had been taken for that of the Archduchess.

I have the Paris papers yet that tell how the public was hoaxed.

But Blair does not paint religious compositions. He makes his home in London, where he enjoys a great vogue as a fashionable portrait-painter. His wife, Valérie, is as much a success socially as her big husband is artistically.

The Russian, Euxine, and his sister, who is now widowed, are still members of the Russian colony in Paris, though they frequently exchange visits across the Channel with the pair they call "the two rogues."



MODERN ROMANCE

INFORMATION, speculation, fluctuation, ruination.
 Dissipation, degradation; reformation or starvation.
 Application, situation; occupation, restoration.
 Concentration, enervation, nerve prostration. A vacation.

Destination, country station. Nice location, recreation.
 Exploration, observation; fascination—a flirtation.
 Trepidation, hesitation, conversation, simulation;
 Invitation, acclamation, sequestration, cold libation.

Stimulation, animation; inspiration, new potation.
 Demonstration, agitation, circulation, exclamation!
 Declaration, acceptance, osculation, sweet sensation.
 Exultation, preparation, combination, new relation.

HENRY M. BLOSSOM, JR.



NOT A DISAPPOINTMENT

"SHE married him for fun."
 "And did she get a divorce?"
 "Oh, yes; that's where the fun came in."

RONDEL

BEFORE Love's wings were clipped
 How merrily he flew!
 'Neath Summer skies of blue,
 O'er flowers divinely lipped.

Gold pinions, azure tipped,
 Brought messages from you.
 Before Love's wings were clipped
 How merrily he flew!

Too deep in joy we dipped,
 Sweet, hidden things we knew;
 So strong the fair plumes grew,
 To heaven we might have slipped—
 Before Love's wings were clipped!

CONSTANCE FARMAR.



DANGEROUS REALISM

SHE—What caused the trouble between Colonel Rumblossom and the artist?

HE—The artist asked him what color he wanted his nose painted.



PROPERLY LOCATED

BOBBIE—I can't see why the funny bone was put in the elbow, pa.

FATHER—Why not, my son? That's a funny place for it.



DANGER IN DELAY

SHE—Would you hesitate before marrying a woman for her money?

HE—Oh, no. A man who is marrying a woman for her money has no time to lose.

MRS. EDGERLY'S NEW MAID

A MERE EPISODE

By Charles G. D. Roberts

MRS. EDGERLY is a very beautiful woman, and her friends speak truly when they tell her that she does not look twenty-five. As a matter of fact, she is fully ten years older; and being a woman of quick wit she suspects her friends of flattery. Her wit falls just short of that final and finest intuition which should have assured her that they spoke the barest truth. She has been a widow for fifteen years, and therefore she was wont to say that for fifteen years she has not been permitted to hear the truth. She views her tall, girlishly slim figure in the glass, her fresh, transparent skin, her abundant, gold-brown hair, the laughing brightness of her eyes, and tells herself anxiously that mirrors, like photographs or like Belial, can make the worse appear the better reason. She has a delicate audacity in her similes, as in all things else, and she fears nothing in the world except spiders and the loss of her beauty.

From a six months' wandering in Europe Mrs. Edgerly came back to economize for a time in her quiet suburban cottage. Three days later, and before she had quite recovered from the fatigues of traveling and begun to show herself in public, her maid Maggie was called home. The girl had lost a near relative, and was wired for at short notice. As she was to be gone but three days, Mrs. Edgerly decided to do without a maid during Maggie's absence. She had been extravagant in Paris, and was now in that repentant mood when the present saving of a dollar

condones the past squandering of a hundred. Mrs. Edgerly had a good many hundreds on her conscience, so she planned to save several dollars.

The maid Maggie was a pretty girl, not long out of her teens. She was faithful and amiable, and Mrs. Edgerly was fond of her. She could not help, however, an occasional twinge of jealousy at the thought of Maggie's youth.

"How sweet and fresh she'll look in mourning! How battered I'll look beside her!" she murmured to herself the evening after Maggie's departure. She glanced wistfully into the glass; then, putting on a coquettish little dust-cap and a somewhat faded gingham wrapper, she went down to the kitchen. It was nearly eleven o'clock, for she had left the work till an hour when there would be no longer any danger of callers.

It was a slow business washing the dishes, because she hated to put her dainty fingers into the dish-water. It came to an end at last, however, and then she found herself hungry. She brought some burgundy and cold chicken from the pantry, and at sight of them experienced a thrill of exhilaration. She felt like a child playing house-keeper. As she nibbled at a chicken wing and sipped her wine she began to sigh for an adventure of some sort.

It is a hard and cheerless philosophy that tells us we need never expect adventures when we are looking for them. Things do sometimes happen opportunely. Mrs. Edgerly sighed for she knew not what. Just

at that instant came a soft tapping at the kitchen door.

Mrs. Edgerly started and repented of her wish. This was too sudden. The knock was repeated, with more confidence. Then her habitual audacity revived.

"It's some friend of Maggie," she said to herself. "There's something to learn here." And she opened the door.

The tall, blue-coated form of a policeman met her view. "Well, lassie," he exclaimed, in a voice that fell pleasantly on her ears, "how goes it to-night?" Then, having stepped across the threshold, he stopped in some embarrassment.

"Beg pardon," said he, taking off his cap. "I expected to see Miss Maggie Brown."

Mrs. Edgerly's resolution was taken on the instant. Here was just such a piece of innocent mischief as her heart cried out after. Bashfully wrapping her slim white hands in her apron, she dropped a little curtsy and cried:

"My lands, sir! how you startled me! Won't you walk in and take a chair?"

The stranger's eyes gleamed merrily, and rested on her flushing face with frankest admiration. They were fine eyes, brown, candid and humorous. His dark hair was cut not too closely to show the hint of a curl in it. He made no more inquiry for Miss Maggie Brown, being plainly well content with her successor. Mrs. Edgerly was pleased. As he sat down beside the table she noticed that his strong hands were clean and well kept. "Can this be an ordinary policeman?" she wondered. But aloud she exclaimed:

"Maggie Brown's gone away, sir. She's left Mrs. Edgerly all of a sudden. The Missis has got me in her place."

"The Missis is a very fortunate woman," said the visitor, heartily.

"Lands, sir! I don't know about that," said Mrs. Edgerly. "I'm afraid, some, she's going to find her new maid a lot of bother. You see, I

ain't lived out much, an' I've got a lot to learn."

The eyes of this singular policeman scanned her persistently, till she flushed, and hastily offered him some chicken and a glass of wine. The visitor glanced at the label on the burgundy, then hesitated.

"This is a costly wine," said he. "Your mistress has a nice taste, evidently, in wine as well as in maids. But would she like her choice vintage to be consumed by the policeman?"

"My lands!" said Mrs. Edgerly, unable at the moment to think of any other exclamation suitable to a housemaid, "how you go on! I assure you—I mean, I bet my Missis wouldn't grudge the best in her cellar—and she hasn't much—to the men that keeps her an' her belongings safe from burglars. Anyways, you see this bottle's 'most empty. She gave it to me herself, to take a little when I felt I needed it, because, she said, it would lose its flavor after being opened."

"It hasn't lost it yet, by any means," remarked the policeman, tasting it critically.

Mrs. Edgerly changed the subject.

"Are you a great friend of Maggie's?" she asked, innocently. For some reason, inexplicable to herself, she hoped for a denial.

"Oh, I have but a calling acquaintance with the pretty Maggie," said the visitor.

"How sorry you must be to find her out," said Mrs. Edgerly.

"I don't think Maggie's ever likely to be found out," said the visitor, whimsically, examining one of his bright brass buttons. "She struck me as too innocent to have anything to conceal, and too clever not to conceal it well if she had to."

Such praise of Maggie nettled Mrs. Edgerly. "Oh," she remarked, forgetting her housemaid's dialect, "Maggie has a most devoted champion!" Then, with a little gasp and a frightened look at his face, she remembered her part and assumed what she imagined to be a suitable simper.

"I s'pose, now," said she, "you won't be after calling again, now Maggie's gone."

The visitor's manner for an instant became just a little different—less careless, more deferential, and at the same time subtly caressing, in a way that, to Mrs. Edgerly's wondering vexation, thrilled her curiously.

"Indeed," said he, leaning forward, "I have been here but twice before—and then only by way of conforming to the time-honored customs of policemen."

"But land's sakes! don't you go to tell me you ain't in love with Maggie Brown!" cried Mrs. Edgerly.

"How absurd!" said the visitor. "Maggie is nice enough in her way, but—" and the shrug of his broad shoulders said the rest. His eyes dwelt on her in a way that stirred a little insurrection in her heart. The knowledge of her disguise led her on perilously. At the same time she was wondering how this man came to be wearing a policeman's uniform. She even reddened a little at the thought of appearing to him so ignorant and silly. But there was no help for it. He was leaning back in his chair, his eyes dancing with mingled appreciation, humor and daring as they wandered over her face, her hair, the poise of her figure, the fineness and the fairness of her hands, which she had forgotten to keep hidden. What should she say? Mere silliness seemed her only safe refuge. She cast down her eyes, twisted her apron and murmured:

"An' if Mary Allen—" Mrs. Edgerly's name was Mary Allen aforetime, and she loved to use the truth for purposes of deception—"is only a nice, decent girl, an' not what you could call right down pretty, maybe you wouldn't want to be calling on *her*."

Mrs. Edgerly stammered, for she was in sore doubt as to her vocabulary. Her guest, meanwhile, had been studying the neatly slipped, slender foot that peeped from beneath her frock. His suspicions became a certainty.

"But I mustn't let her suspect that I've discovered her," he thought, "or this delightful interview would come to a sudden end."

As Mrs. Edgerly raised her eyes to his he sprang up and stood beside her.

"I'll come," said he, gazing audaciously down into her eyes, "just whenever the very loveliest little housemaid in the world would let me," and he raised her fingers to his lips.

Flushing hotly, Mrs. Edgerly snatched her hand away and cried:

"Oh, Mr. Policeman, if you mean me, I guess you can't have seen many. And it's very wrong of you to kiss my hand, when we ain't never been rightly introduced."

The visitor looked at her with burning eyes.

"I'm Dennis O'Rourke, otherwise known as No. 13, a graceless poor devil who is playing in hard luck, after blowing in all his money trying to see the world, and who now, having seen Mrs. Edgerly's new maid, is ready to swear that there is nothing else in the world worth seeing."

"That's not his real name, I know," said Mrs. Edgerly to herself, "but he's Irish fast enough, or he couldn't say such perfectly lovely things." Aloud she said, with a simper:

"I'm Mary Allen, if you please, sir, what's doin' the general work just now for Mrs. Edgerly. As soon as I set eyes on you I knowed as how you was a gentleman, or I wouldn't 'a' let you stay this way so late, when the Missis is out."

"But it isn't late. I'm sure I haven't been here five minutes!" exclaimed the visitor.

Mrs. Edgerly was not more anxious than he to terminate such an exhilarating interview; but she bethought her of propriety and prudence.

"Oh, yes, it is late; and you must go, for the Missis may be back any minute."

The visitor stood very close beside her.

"I wonder if she knows that it's quite the proper thing for the po-

liceman to kiss the housemaid?" he thought. "If she does know, and I don't do it, she'll think I don't appreciate my opportunity, and be insulted. If she doesn't know, and I do do it, she'll be still more insulted, perhaps."

Meanwhile he had again taken her hand, and this time in so firm a grasp that she could not draw it away.

"Faith," he murmured, bending over it, "'tis a white little hand to be washing dishes for a living."

"Land's sakes, Mr. O'Rourke!" cried Mrs. Edgerly, a little tremulously, "but you mustn't be a-squeezin' of it that way, now."

The visitor turned the hand palm upward, and before she realized what he was going to do, he had kissed first the tender pink hollow of it, and then the bewildering, blue-veined whiteness of the wrist.

"You know," said he, glancing mischievously straight into her eyes, "that's quite the usual way for the policeman to say good-night to the housemaid."

Mrs. Edgerly caught her breath with a sob. Then the tears sprang to her eyes, but pride held them back.

"Go, go at once!" she cried, wrenching her hand free, and running across to the door at the foot of the stairs. There she turned and looked at him with eyes of reproach.

"But I think I love Mrs. Edgerly's new maid," said he, whimsically.

"Go at once, I command you! Please go!" cried Mrs. Edgerly, in confusion. The door closed violently behind her and he heard her light feet running up the stairs.

For a few minutes this singular policeman stood deeply pondering. He turned off the gas and went out softly, closing the door with care. And this singular housemaid, lying on her couch by the window behind the thin curtains, felt no anxiety whatever on the score of her unbolted kitchen doors. She had acquired such confidence in the police force of her town.



POOR LITTLE FLIES!

A MAIDEN in the hammock swings,
A youth is there beside her;
The hammock's like the spider's web,
And Cupid plays the spider.



WOULD DO HIS BEST

SHE—After I marry you, Fred, will you reform?
HE—Yes, if it isn't too late.



AN ATHLETIC AMOUR

SHE—Do you think Miss Elderly is trying to draw him out?
HE—No. I think she is trying to persuade him to double up.

AT THE END OF THE COURSE

By Martha McCulloch-Williams

SOMEONE riding like the Wild Huntsman disturbed the delicate morning silence and the lethargy of the men on the piazza.

"Say, Roy, old man, who's going off by himself at this unholy hour?" Gladwin asked, craning his neck to look down the avenue.

A wondering chorus answered him. "Why, it's the Regent himself, on Highball!"

"Lord, but he can ride—still!" exclaimed "Flax" Jethro, as his tilted chair came down hard on Bantry's foot. "The Regent can ride," he repeated, staring hard after the vanishing figure. "There's nobody like him—not even his own son. 'Tisn't only a matter of hands and seat, and judgment—somehow, in a staggerin' finish he can get more out of a beast than anybody else I ever saw on the pignskin. Look at him!—straight as he was at twenty, and pretty near as slim—and I, that used to ride with him, a lump on legs!"

Bantry nursed his foot and swore a little. "Oh, yes, the Regent was at the top—in his day," he said, "but that was twenty years back. Flax wants to make us uncomfortable—he knows every mother's son of us has four figures on Red, Red Rose in every book that lays decent odds against her. There's no combination that will beat Roy and the Rose."

Roy stood in the open hall door, a splendid red setter at his side. All the house party had gathered on the piazza for an after-breakfast smoke. Thence one could see most of the three thousand rolling acres that made up Highways. The house, a

gray-stone Colonial pile, with an exotic turreted wing jutting oddly from the southeast angle, topped a long swell, still partly clothed in primeval forest growth. The winding avenue had been cut through the forest. All about the house there was short, velvety turf, green as in May, and diamonded with drenching dew. Everybody had risen early, although the shooting, for which the party had gathered, would not begin until next day.

Mid-October's royal riot of purple and gold and scarlet shone unscathed in the flower beds. The fragrant air was Summer-soft—so soft the first yellow leaves fluttering down through the sunshine seemed alien and discordant. Lacy wefts of mist hovered in the swales, rising slow to join the clouds low in the valley at the far verge of the estate. It was park-land, and game cover throughout more than half. The Regent, otherwise Marmaduke Marston, Esquire, held under patent from the earliest Colonial Governor to the original Marston, a Scotch laird's younger son. But it was to a nearer ancestor—the Marston of two generations back, who had gone into the City and commerce—that the Regent owed the princely fortune that kept up the estate.

Men said the Regent loved three things—his horses, his name and his son. Money came to him fast, but departed the same way. As a result, when he was well along in the fifties he found himself half as rich as at one-and-twenty. By way of offset, his name was the accepted synonym for honor, as his world reckoned honor; his colors had been first at the finish

in many classic events on both sides of the water, and memory held for him no haunting sins of omission; he had pursued pleasure frankly and fairly, and embraced it whenever, wherever it had come within grasp.

"Anybody for the Club?" Roy asked; "or shall it be the stables? I'm for riding—after a while—but whoever cares to drive can order the break——"

"Royal, my son," said Gladwin, "what's the matter with each of us spinning his own little peg-top to-day as best suits himself?"

The red setter licked Roy's hand, ran to the edge of the piazza, and looked back at its master with a little entreating whine. Roy followed toward the stables, with a parting nod to his friends. Gladwin rose and strolled down the steps in the opposite direction. Jethro joined him. The two were the Regent's nearest friends. As they walked down the lawn Jethro said:

"I've been on the ragged edge since the letters came in at breakfast. The Regent got a billet that turned him green-white——"

"No wonder," said Gladwin. "It was from his wife. I know her hand—she and my sister are cronies." After a moment's silence he added: "I'll lay odds she has not written to him twice before since she left the place."

"I know," Jethro returned. "The Regent told me—only time he ever mentioned her. Lord! to think of love's young dream ending as it did! Theirs was a love match, you know—and neither of 'em over twenty. I stood up with them. Only time I ever saw the Regent in a blue funk, but she—well! if the world came to an end Elinor Wyndham would do no more than draw a hard breath. See how she has acted all through—left the Regent, dry-eyed, with her head up, and after that, no scandal, not even a hint of divorce."

"Do you know why she went?" Gladwin asked.

Jethro shook his head. "Nobody does—except the Regent, who cannot

tell," he said, smiling enigmatically. "I fancy—mind, it's only fancy!—he gave her a rival she was ashamed of. She was the sort to accept the half-world as equitable masculine pleasure ground. When he left it for women of her own order—well, you'll admit there was a chance for situations!"

"Why, the Regent would have shielded her—" Gladwin began.

Jethro checked him with a look. "A man—even the Regent—may find himself bound two ways," he said. "The Regent is not over-tender. No woman—not even his wife—has been more to him than an episode. But as regards his *bonnes fortunes* his creed is austere. He would do murder twice over sooner than slur or stain a woman accounted spotless who had trusted him."

"Well, his wife's a thoroughbred. Not a woman in ten thousand would have let him have the boy, whenever he chose to ask for him," Gladwin said, judicially.

Jethro nodded emphatic assent. "Thoroughbred clean through!" he replied. "They don't make such women any more. There were three sons, and only Roy is left. A petty woman would have seen in him her chance of revenge. Elinor never let herself forget that the lad had a father."

"It would not have been easy. Royal and the Regent are as like as two peas."

Again Jethro nodded, but added, slowly: "The lad's a standing puzzle to me. His father's image, he yet wears his mother's look. It was mighty strong this morning. Did you notice the set of his lips when he saw the Regent go out of sight? That was Elinor to the life."

"I dare say he guessed the Regent's errand," Gladwin said, cautiously.

Jethro wheeled on him. "What do you *know*?" he demanded. "Were you in the west wood yesterday?"

"You were," Gladwin said, smiling faintly.

Jethro sighed. "I was. Out for a nice lonesome ride through a place as lovely and empty as the Garden of

Eden. At least most times. Yesterday it was not empty. Roy was there, riding at a woman's elbow and looking for heaven in her eyes. The woman was Adrienne Wake—er—well, Mrs. St. John Clare."

"And Roy is twenty-seven, and has never fancied himself seriously in love! Lord! but it will go hard with him!" Gladwin said.

Jethro laughed impatiently. "Maybe not. I grant you she is bewildering as an angel, but she can't possibly be one—she never had a soul."

Mrs. St. John Clare's place, Fairy Lea, lay five miles from Highways, yet the Regent galloped twice that distance before he dared trust himself within its precincts. They were unfamiliar yet not wholly strange. He made no visits in his yearly sojourns at Highways, though dispensing at home a liberal and luxurious bachelor hospitality, and offering to the women of his acquaintance ceremonious entertainment at the Country Club, which was in large part his creation. Naturally his feminine guests pitied him, and were to a woman for him as against his wife. If only they could have regarded him as dangerous, at least half of them would have worshipped him. But that the Regent had no mind to permit. He had the normal masculine vanity, but it thrived on other food.

Fairy Lea deserved its name. The house was low, many-gabled, ivy-clad, and set in a cup of green hills. The flower-sprent lawn ran down to a toy lake, flashing gem-like, with a big white swan on its breast and a whiter shallop with painted sails rocking idly at the foot of stone steps. Roses bloomed everywhere, loose-leafed, heavy-headed, royally sweet. All was still as in an enchanted palace.

The Regent slipped from his horse as soon as he was inside the boundaries and scanned the façade narrowly. While he looked, a peacock, strutting on the terrace, spied him out and set up a raucous cry. He knew he must be quick if he hoped to go

and come unseen save by one pair of eyes. The tinkle of a mandolin came through a long, open window. He strode forward, parted the draperies of gold-colored silk, and stepped into a room redolent of roses.

At sound of his footsteps a woman sprang up, wheeling toward him. She was slim as a reed, ivory-pale, with sea-green eyes, deep-red lips and heavy, pale-gold hair in a burnished crown rippling above a low forehead. A great red rose lay against the snow of her bare neck. White garments, loose yet clinging, trailed about her in long folds. She had dropped the mandolin, that made only a little melodious tinkling on the rich rug at her feet.

She had turned with a low laugh and a bright smile that were succeeded by a sudden cry as she faced the Regent.

"Duke! Oh, go away! Quick!" she panted. "Remember, this is not France."

"No, it is not France," the Regent said, moving a pace nearer. "Still, I can ask your purpose. What is it?—amusement or vengeance?"

"Go away! What do you mean?" the woman cried, weakly.

The Regent's face hardened. "This should explain sufficiently," he said, thrusting into her hand a thick sheet clearly written. There was neither address nor signature, only three abrupt sentences. "Our son writes me that he loves and hopes to marry Mrs. St. John Clare. Unless I am mistaken she was Adrienne Wake. I leave it to your discretion to prevent or permit the marriage."

As Adrienne read a flicker of shamed scarlet lit the ivory pallor of her cheeks. Her head even drooped a little as she asked, crushing the letter in her hands: "Well, what of it?"

The Regent shook himself irritably. "You cannot be mad enough to dream of marrying my son," he said. "Since you have entangled him, name the price of his freedom."

"Cruel! brutal!" the woman cried, putting up her hands and cower-

ing as from a blow. "Understand—I love Roy; he is so like——"

The Regent's hand went over her mouth. "There are things I will not bear," he said, hoarsely.

She covered her face, moaning. "I was so young, Duke—only seventeen—I am but thirty now—and I have been nine years alone——"

The Regent set his teeth. "You took your own way," he said. "You yearned to be—respectable——"

"I *am* respectable; better, far better than you; better than any man!" she cried, springing away from him, her drooping supplianee lost in a flash of wrath. "What is more, I mean to be happy."

The Regent left her an hour later, dazed, wordless, defeated. She had defied him, flouted him, until he wondered dully why he did not murder her and end it all. As he rode homeward he found himself vacantly repeating: "Our pleasant vices are made whips to sting us." It summed his own case. In leaving him to the stinging of such whips Elinor was abundantly avenged. What cut deepest was that he owed this present defeat wholly to himself. Who else had made Mrs. St. John Clare's position so impregnable? All her world knew her history—or thought it did—knew it as a romance touched with pathos. Well born and beautiful, when her father's death left her penniless she had pluckily gone abroad to develop a fine artistic gift. She had succeeded modestly, had married a fellow artist six hours before his death, and as his widow had come into a small competence. In addition to this, her godmother, who left her by will all her personal belongings, turned out to have been a miser, hoarding money in secret drawers, and chairs and couches. Money enough was found to make the young widow rich. Hence Fairy Lea—which was her girlhood's home—glorified. She loved the place, spending there eight months of each year.

An impeccable chatelaine, she was hospitable, kindly, given to good

works, and devout—sometimes even out of Lent. Suitors had been plenty. Those she had not sent away she had managed to bestow among her young woman friends. The Regent cursed himself for the lack of foresight that had let his son fall under her spell. He could not speak to Roy of her, since he might not speak truth. Some things are not named between gentlemen even when they do not happen to be father and son. He had thought to bribe or frighten her, and he was beaten, hopelessly beaten. Elinor—might he not appeal to her? He put the thought from him. Least of all could he ask her to save him from the scourge knotted of his own "pleasant vices" as of small cords.

It was a spent beast, almost staggering in its tracks, that took him home toward midday. Unexpectedly he came on his guests assembled in the stable yard. Roy was in the midst of them, his eyes still showing his mother's look. It vanished as the Regent called to him: "What odds, young man? Have you shaded them since yesterday? Say quick! I'm in the humor to give you the chance to beggar me."

"At your service, sir," Roy said. He had never grown out of the old-fashioned deference his mother had taught him to show his father. The Regent got down heavily and stretched himself as one waking from heavy sleep. He had caught a glimpse of a way out—desperately dangerous, but what matter, if it saved the lad? He wondered that he had not thought of it earlier. Roy was his son ready to pay what he lost, even though it were life itself.

He threw one arm protectingly across his son's shoulder. "Listen, all you gentlemen! I stake with my son, against the winning of his mare, Red, Red Rose, in the Hurricane, to be run next Saturday, my estate of Highways, with all its appurtenances, my money in bank, stocks, bonds, and all other property, real, personal or mixed, of which I stand seized and possessed——"

"Regent! stop! This is getting too serious," Jethro entreated.

The Regent smiled. "I know what I'm about," he said. "The big risk lies with Roy. He has to put against Highways—his liberty in marriage. If I win, he takes a wife of my choosing, not his own."

"Capital!" laughed Bantry. "I really thought you were in earnest."

"So I am," the Regent said. "Is it a bet, son?"

Roy's head went up. "I'm your son, sir. Did anybody ever back you down when you felt you could win?" he asked, smiling proudly.

The Regent held out his hand. "Shake," he said. "It's all settled. Luckily, in a gentleman's race we can bet on ourselves. I am backing myself. Edelweiss is entered for the Hurricane—and I intend to ride her."

The Wessex Gentlemen's Racing Association always had a field day with the Hurricane on the card, but never in the thirty years since it was established had the grounds been so thronged as on the Saturday when Edelweiss went out to meet the Red, Red Rose. There were an oval mile track and a straight-away half-mile, with the Country Club dominating both, its piazzas serving to shelter the socially elect. But the great event was no tame affair of ordered courses. Instead it was a true steeplechase—point to point, something better than four miles of roughish country, though for the most part in grass, criss-crossed with stone walls and threaded plentifully with water veins bordered very largely with bog. Here and there was a timber fence or a banked hedge backed or fronted by a ditch. Still, on the whole the going was reasonably good. The hunting set never complained of it, and it was mainly the hunting set that furnished riders for the Hurricane. The prize, which was always a silver-gilt cup, had been won at least a dozen times by members of the Wessex Hunt. Collectively these trophies gave the last touch of distinction to the famous Hunt breakfasts.

The present running of the Hurri-

cane excited even more interest than usual. The packed piazzas thrilled over it, the massed lawns caught the contagion. Never had there been a Hurricane so open, yet only ten days back it had been reckoned all over but the shouting. Four, five, seven, eight, even nine to one, the betting had run on Red, Red Rose and her owner. Any way you reckoned it, that combination could not lose. Since early Spring the good mare, disdaining penalties, often foregoing sex allowance, had run and won herself into a class by herself. Not for naught was she St. Simon's granddaughter, the stout English strain reinforced by the quicksilver blood of the blue grass. A bright bay with silky mane and tail, she stood the least bit under sixteen hands and stepped on four as good legs as ever carried a thoroughbred. She had a beautiful, lean head, tapering finely, with a white star symmetrically placed between lustrous eyes. Ears not too small, but delicately pointed, played back and forth incessantly whenever she was on the course. Her groom swore it was from vanity—she knew people talked of her, and wanted to miss nothing said. However that may have been, when a race began the ears lay flat and steady against her neck, never lifting till her nose was over the line. She loved two things, a race and her master. All else she took on sufferance, save always such matters as exercise and oats.

To-day she came out in her worst temper, possibly through disdain of the betting world's fickleness. What was there about that creature Edelweiss, she might well have asked, to send the odds tumbling till rathe and venturous souls laid as little as three to one on her? Certainly Edelweiss was no beauty, standing as she did an inch higher at the hips than at the withers, with a coat of indeterminate gray no grooming could make shine, a rat tail, thin, almost up-standing mane, both flax-gray, and a staring white nose. Still, she had her good points, if one but got near enough to see—a splendid head on a fine, stami-

nate neck, a deep, roomy barrel, magnificent sloping shoulders and quarters of the massy and mighty muscle that bespeak driving power. Except for a temper that was the fiend's own she might all along have disputed primacy with the Red, Red Rose. When the Regent rode her, and he chose, and she chose, she simply burned up ground, cross-country or on the flat. When the Regent did not ride her she made her own pace—usually the slowest in the field.

Hence the change in odds. The Regent had entered her, partly through whim, partly because he wanted the fun of seeing Gladwin at her mercy. Gladwin had begged for the mount through sheer love of sport. Even with ten jumps in the mile added to the glorious uncertainty of racing, he had not hoped for a winning fluke. He accepted cheerfully Westray, the Regent's second entry. As the starting bugle sounded, he turned to his host and said, cheerily: "It'll always be something to remember and tell about—that I rode with you in this last race. You say it is the last—I hope you won't change your mind. None of us youngsters has a ghost of a show as long as you're in the field."

"It is certainly a last appearance," the Regent replied, almost jovially; "therefore I am the more bound to win. Defeated, I could not apply myself graciously to learning the art of being grandfather."

"Have you got a wife picked out for Roy?" Gladwin asked. He did not mean to be in the least impertinent; seeing nothing under the surface, he still held the wager to be no more than humorous fooling between father and son.

The Regent smiled a trifle grimly and shook his head. "I have made no choice," he said. "I shall make none. All I require is that when it comes to wiving, Roy shall take no woman his mother does not cordially approve."

Roy, at the Regent's elbow, heard, and set his teeth. He knew his mother would never approve Adrienne. But there was no chance, none at all,

that her senseless opposition could cross his love. His heart, his life's happiness, lay in the next hour's hazard, and he was there, with the Red, Red Rose under him, to save it for himself.

Three abreast, their riders all in top-boots, black breeches and gay silken jackets, the dozen horses trooped prancing to the start. It was from the near end of the straight-away. From the far end, where the grass began, the land trended downward, but so gently as to enhance speed rather than hinder it. The course was fifty yards between the flags and ran down and athwart the clear valley, to end at last in the face of a sharp ramp, with a slim white belfry on top. Strokes from the bell told the winner's number to such of the course crowd as had no glasses to see. With glasses, unless the day was uncommonly murky, or the finish uncommonly close, one could see for one's self.

The finish line ran between two tall masts crowned with big flags. But the mark was the belfry spire. Every rider fixed his eyes on that, and so rode a steeplechase in fact as well as in name. The judges, the timers and an elect few racing enthusiasts clustered on the ramp-side, or occupied the vantage point of the tiny belfry porch. All along the way the humbler sort of country folk gathered in knots to gape and hurrah.

Heads up, reins taut, the sunlight playing over their hot, satiny sides, the horses waited in line for the tap of the drum, and when they caught it, broke into blurs and bunches of twinkling color. The Marston blue and silver had been at either end of the line. In a breath one blue jacket led, a length clear of everything; the other had fallen as far behind. The man in front rode a bay mare that ran lightly and easily and took the first leap, a hurdle backed with brush, about the middle of the straight-away, with the soaring grace of a bird. The rider behind held with wrists of iron an ungainly gray brute that he gave thus early the spur. The Regent was fighting a desperate battle here in the

outset, one that seemed to forbid even a hope of final victory. On the dam's side Edelweiss came of Tartar strain. Not even her Longstreet blood, free-going, lion-hearted, could quite overpower the savagery of the desert.

She swerved from the spur, rearing slightly. A savage slash in the flank sent her down and forward like the thrust of a lance. Any other rider would have lost balance. The Regent smiled, flung his weight forward and sent her at the hurdle. She cleared it as if it were plain earth, but in three strides made as if to check and rear again. The Regent pulled her head high, sent both spurs up to the rowels, raining lashes the while on quarter and sides. "It's do or die," he said to her, savagely. In answer she snatched for the bit, got her head measurably and settled to running as she only could run.

To any other horse, any other rider, the race was clearly lost. The worst of the ruck flaunted tails fifty yards in front of her; Red, Red Rose, ahead of everything, still in perfect stride and power, was half a furlong to the good.

For the first time doubt laid hold on the Regent. He had been so supremely confident, his alarm was worse than a knife-thrust. It caught away his breath—or was it that cruel pain in the heart? The doctor had warned him—he knew that in riding the race he took his life in his hand. But he would not be beaten—Death, hell or Adrienne should not prevail against him. Slacking rein by an inch, he spoke to the mare softly, persuasively, almost pleadingly.

His heart leaped and eased to see her. Her neck went out, her ears back. The soul of the desert had awakened and leaped up as fire. By the time they were out of the straight-away they had overhauled half the ruck and were on even terms with some of the real contenders. Gladwin turned with a cheer as the gray head locked itself on Westray's quarter. Together they took a stone wall a hundred yards in front, where three horses balked outright and one came to grief. "Well done!" the Regent

shouted, and Gladwin felt that he had been knighted on the field. For a breath they held stride for stride, then the gray stretched herself athwart the long grassed furrows, and in a twinkling Westray was behind.

Eyes blazing, nostrils flaring, and foam-streaked from counter to flank, Edelweiss tore after the leaders. They were but three—Hunt Cup, reckoned all along the place horse; Scratch, a rank outsider, though bred in the purple, and the queen of the course, Red, Red Rose.

The queen still ran easily, playing with the bit, her shining flanks unscarred and free of sweat-marks with the race half-run. Race! It was hardly more than a play-spin! Thus said Red Rose's lifted head. Her rider's face was white. A great light shone from his eyes, yet somehow he did not see very clearly—even the guiding spire dissolved now and then into a zigzag silvery blur against the blue. Sure victory ennobled him. He would not abuse it. Highways—everything—should still be his father's—in return he would ask only liberty for Adrienne to justify his choice. She waited for him, high on the ramp-side, with her companion and a friend or two whom they could trust to be discreet. He had not told her of the wager. She did not even know his father would contend with him in the race. He would tell her everything—afterward. They were of one mind that there should be no secrets.

The course, which had run through long pastures, now went across walls and hedges, with hardly breathing space between. The high ground skirting it to the left was blotched with people—staring people, who looked not at the foremost rider but beyond him. Suddenly they broke into shouts and cheers. Roy half turned his head. Hunt Cup was in trouble—Scratch had fallen a length behind. But locked on him, coming as comes the whirlwind, devouring space with long bounds, was something gray with a glint of blue above, stretching to lie almost flat on the

earth, gathering, stretching again, coming, coming with the speed of light.

In a wink the gray head ran even. Red Rose had been merely galloping between fences. She was almost fresh—fresh enough to swerve from the redoubled cheering. The Regent rose in stirrups, shook his whip and pointed forward, crying: "Have at you, Roy! Don't let me win too easily."

Roy's answer was a whistle shrill and sharp, then indeed the Red, Red Rose lay down to it, stretching to long, greyhound leaps, drawing mighty breaths that set her heart laboring and planted dark stains in her heaving flanks. At the fence fifty yards further on she led by a length—she was over it and running by the time Edelweiss had negotiated it. Thus she showed the way over a dozen stiff barriers until the pair were well within the last half-mile. It was clear save for a water jump—a brook with well-grassed banks, safe to the eye but for treacherous blotches here and there. It had to be taken running—a heart-breaking leap no horse ever foaled of mare was equal to when blown, a fact both riders knew well. Both eased their mounts and held hard as nose and nose they thundered down to the stream. Foam flakes flew from the gray mare's bit—she was reeking and lathery from nose to tail. Yet since she gave over fighting and settled to running she had not felt whip or spur. If she lost she would lose to herself—if she won it would be through love of her imperious conqueror.

Neck and neck, one low, one high, stride for stride, as if impelled by the same mighty machine, whirlwind-wise the mares went at the water-jump—and over. There Fate took up the running—Fate that possibly owed the Regent still a little more. Landing on sound earth, at the second stride Edelweiss bogged half-way to the knees—with the finish-line two hundred yards away! Jethro, waiting on the ramp-side, saw through his glass the Regent's

face grow ashen, and groaned in his beard: "God! Poor old man! He's killed himself—and all to no good! The boy's bound to win—his own destruction."

The Regent, in the grip of mortal agony, kept his blurring gaze fast on the slim white spire. But he did not see it. Between there floated Adrienne's face in the full appeal of its devil's beauty. She should not triumph—not even with Death at her back. Through clenched teeth, in a voice strangely hoarse, he roared, lifting the gray mare with superhuman force: "Ho, lady! Up with you and on!"

In a mad, scrambling bound she did go up and out and on after the leader, breathing in long gasps and with eyeballs almost bursting, yet never flinching from the strain. Cheers broke at the sight—cheers even from those who stood to lose on Red, Red Rose.

Straight-coursed as an arrow in flight, inch by inch, foot by foot, the gray mare at last wore down the lead. If her nose was first over the line by a bare six inches it was there first—and the Regent's last ride a winning one. Five yards beyond victory she staggered and almost fell. Roy, at her quarter, leaped down and gained his father's side as he tottered in the saddle.

Adrienne darted to him, her lips livid, terror of she knew not what dulling her sea-green eyes. She caught Roy's shoulder as the Regent toppled and fell prone in his son's arms. For a minute he lay there gasping. Suddenly he stiffened, and stood upright, looking at his lad through glazing eyes, and saying with whitening lips, that somehow kept still their old, imperious curve: "Dying is not so hard, Roy—now that—I have saved you—from—Mrs. Clare. You are—safe—my son."

"When I lose, I pay," Roy said, with a groan and sudden blighting comprehension.

The Regent fell forward. When they raised him he was quite dead, but with the triumph of a man's soul frozen in his face.

A MAID WHO DIED OLD

By Madison Cawein

FRAIL, shrunken face, so pinched and worn,
That life has carved with care and doubt!
So weary waiting, night and morn,
For that which never came about!
Pale lamp, so utterly forlorn,
In which God's light at last is out.

Gray hair, that lies so thin and prim
On either side the sunken brows!
Closed, hollow eyes, so deep and dim,
Whose fire no word could now arouse,
And folded hands, so virgin slim,
Forever clasped in silent vows!

Poor breasts, that God designed for love,
For baby lips to kiss and press!
That never felt, yet dreamed thereof,
The human touch, the child caress—
That lie like shriveled blooms above
The heart's long-perished happiness.

Oh, withered body, Nature gave
For purposes of death and birth,
That never knew and could but crave
Those things perhaps that make life worth!
Rest now, alas! within the grave,
Sad shell that served no end of earth.



TRUE TO LIFE

LENA—That's a lifelike picture of Belle, isn't it?
MAUDE—Yes; the dear girl seems to have her eyes on my new bonnet.



MANAGING A MAN

HE—Do you ever let your husband have his own way?
SHE—Oh, yes. I think it does a man good to let him make a fool of himself now and then.

TRAGEDY OF A TRUNK

"DON'T you like to move?" asked Smith, who had dropped in unexpectedly. Mrs. Browne was sitting on a trunk while her husband tugged desperately at the strap.

"Oh, yes, we love it," grunted Browne, pausing a moment to glare at his visitor.

"Let me sit on the trunk, too," offered Smith.

Mrs. Browne was pretty, but she didn't move up.

"No!" declared Browne, vehemently.

"I'll take down a few pictures for you," proposed Smith.

"Don't want 'em down yet!"

"I say, Browne, if you'll only brace your feet against the trunk you can get a much better grip on that strap."

"Who's doing this?" demanded Browne, releasing the strap and losing the quarter of an inch he had gained in the last five minutes.

"Don't you think so, Mrs. Browne?" appealed Smith.

"Oh, I haven't anything to say," replied Mrs. Browne, resignedly.

"How many loads do you think you'll have, old man?" asked Smith, after a pause.

"I don't know! You'd better come round and count."

"Better let me help you with that strap, Browne. You might strain yourself."

"Oh, *do* be careful, John!" cried Mrs. Browne.

"Keep quiet, will you? If I get hurt it's my own fault." Another desperate tug.

"When you come to the china I can give you a few points about packing it," said Smith.

"Haven't got any china left; the cook's broken it all."

Here Browne struggled violently with the strap. Suddenly Smith began to laugh immoderately. Browne swore and kicked the trunk viciously.

"Oh, it's funny, isn't it?" he exclaimed. "I'll be hanged if I can see anything to laugh at! Any more fool suggestions?"

"Well," replied Smith, "if Mrs. Browne will get up and pull her skirt out from under the lid, I think you can lock your trunk without any more trouble. Good-night. I'll call when you're settled in your new house."

And for reply Browne kicked the trunk again.



EMBARRASSING

'TIS well to think twice before speaking;
 Man's tongue is addicted to jinks,
 And he who dares speak without thinking
 Is apt to speak just what he thinks.

THE BLACK ROSE

By Countess Loveau de Chavanne

IT was the night of the Arch-Chancellor's ball, given in great splendor at his *hôtel* on the Champs Élysées. The brilliance of the display, the beauty of the women and their exquisite toilettes combined to render the affair one of uncommon grandeur and magnificence.

The attention of many present was attracted to a couple arriving late. The gentleman was a distinguished Colonel in the French army, the lady a stranger and a woman of singular beauty. She was dressed in black silk, overdressed with gossamer of the same hue and adorned with a profusion of costly lace—a toilette that was a perfect triumph of art. A black pearl of uncommon size and great value was set in the diamond ornament that fastened the luxuriant masses of her black, wavy hair.

The exceeding beauty of the stranger was such as to rivet attention and excite curiosity. The women regarded her jealously. Question followed question, and it was soon circulated that she was known in Paris as "The Black Rose." The stranger remained but an hour, and having accompanied the lady to her carriage, Colonel du Près returned to the ball-room.

"You are highly favored, Colonel," exclaimed one of the guests, as he re-entered. "You have discovered the beauty who is driving all Paris wild. Will you not have pity and relieve our minds by telling us the name of 'The Black Rose,' the beautiful unknown?"

"Certainly," replied Henri du Près. "The lady in question is the Princess Olga de Vianzone. She is

an Italian by birth, a daughter of the Duchess de Ferrare."

"You are her friend?"

"I have the honor to claim that distinction," responded du Près, smiling.

"Happy man! But tell me why she made choice of so singular a costume for a ball—was it from habit or coquetry?"

"I should say habit, as the Princess never wears anything but black. The choice is the result of a tragic adventure."

"Ah! do tell us about it."

"With pleasure, my dear Rousset, but not here," replied Colonel du Près. "Dine with me to-morrow, and you shall know all."

On the following day, at the hour appointed, du Près met his friend at the Palais Royal, and they proceeded to enjoy a good dinner.

"You have heard of the Count de Poyen, have you not?" inquired du Près, as he handed Rousset a cigar. "The question is, however, useless," he continued, "as all Paris has become familiar with both his name and his youthful indiscretion in speaking of the intrigue of two of his acquaintances. A duel followed, and the husband of the lady in question was killed. The Count, owing to this fact, took an oath never to speak another word for ten years."

"Did he keep his oath?" questioned Rousset. "That part of the story, *mon ami*, I never heard before."

"For one year he kept his oath scrupulously. It was at the end of the time named that the Princess de Vianzone met the Count in society. She was then only twenty-two and a

widow; moreover, a woman of poetical and romantic character. The Princess had heard de Poyen's story, and determined to make him break his oath——"

"Just like a woman!" interrupted Rousset, smiling cynically.

"This resolution," continued du Près, "was strengthened by a singular interest he had awakened in the Princess. One evening, as de Poyen was entering his *hôtel*, he was seized suddenly by several men and forced into a carriage in waiting. So quickly was he made a prisoner that he had no time to defend himself, and true to his vow, he dared not speak. At length the equipage, which was most luxurious, halted, and he was conducted in a mysterious manner into a room lighted only by a lamp suspended from the ceiling. The case-ment was open, and the evening breeze filled the apartment with the most intoxicating perfume.

"De Poyen gazed round the room, and at once observed evidences of luxury and taste. But a few moments elapsed when a silken rustle was heard, and the Princess de Vianzone entered. On seeing her the Count sprang to his feet, both surprised and irritated, and could scarcely restrain a gesture of impatience. What annoyed him most was the iron band that bound him to silence, and he walked to and fro, his eyes riveted to the floor.

"The Princess Olga had meanwhile seated herself on a divan, assuming both astonishment and fear at the presence of the stranger. Although her head was bowed, her large dark eyes from beneath their fringed lashes watched his every movement. Passion without provocation, like a fire without fuel, cannot last. Gradually de Poyen grew calm, and at length approached his fair companion and for the first time gazed at her fixedly. You have seen Olga de Vianzone and know how beautiful she is. The full force of her wondrous loveliness, heightened by the mellow light and the soft, clinging folds of her garments, that displayed

to perfection her exquisite form, fascinated de Poyen, and his eyes met hers with a look that eloquently expressed the admiration she had excited.

"Rising slowly, she crossed the room and drew aside the drapery that hid from view the door leading into the adjoining apartment.

"'All I have heard of you,' she said, in a musical voice, 'inspired me with an ardent desire to know you. I find that in many respects I was deceived. I can only beg that you will accept my regret for what I have done, and allow me to tell you that you are free to go.'

"As she ceased speaking she smiled. It is needless to say that de Poyen did not avail himself of the permission to depart. Under the seductive influence of her charms he saw only the woman's exquisite beauty, and failed to dread her power. Taking her small, jeweled hand the Count led his hostess to the couch from which she had risen. In low, soft tones the Princess told him of the deep interest his story had awakened. Enraptured, he listened mutely, by look and sign expressing the feeling she had called forth.

"'I understand you,' said Olga de Vianzone; 'silently you express your admiration, but if I am to believe you I must hear you speak. Even then I will not say that I may not doubt; I can only bid you speak.'

"Pale and troubled, but without hesitation, de Poyen rose instantly, and taking his hat, turned toward the door.

"'I hope we shall meet again,' said the charming Princess, as he stood on the threshold. 'Believe me,' she added, 'you will always receive a welcome.'

"For a moment de Poyen lingered, his eyes resting fondly on her expressive face, then, with a low bow, he left the room.

"Eight days passed and de Poyen did not leave his *hôtel*. The impression made on his sensitive nature by his interview with the Princess Olga

had become all-absorbing. That she loved him he believed, but to win from her an avowal of that love he must break his vow; and the struggle between passion and duty became intense.

"Woman's love, you know, Rousset, is a strange thing at best, ever fitful and fickle as the wind; nevertheless, with some it is an abiding sentiment of the heart, fed by the imagination, and can exist even isolated from the object of its love. With man, the one hope, the one thought of possession absorbs all others.

"The eighth day de Poyen voluntarily entered the boudoir of the Princess Olga, and although received with every expression of favor, he still refused to speak. After fruitless efforts to persuade him to express himself in audible language the Princess became annoyed.

"'Unless you are willing to yield to my request to speak I must bid you adieu,' she said at last.

"De Poyen lingered, but at length took his departure, more in love than ever, and filled with despair; nevertheless, with his vow unbroken. Unwilling to break his oath, yet desirous of winning the Princess, he determined on making another effort.

"There is, you will remember, a beautiful old castle situated a few miles distant from St.-Cloud, and the drive not being much frequented, the castle had become an almost daily resort of the fair Italian.

"One morning, having grown weary of driving, the Princess failed on her return to observe the route taken by the coachman. Absorbed in meditation, she was at length surprised to find herself in the courtyard of an *hôtel* not her own. On hearing the porter's gate close on her entrance she called to her coachman; the man descended from the box, and to her astonishment she discovered that he was unknown to her.

"'Who are you?' demanded the Princess.

"'A domestic in the employ of the Count de Poyen.'

"'Where is your master?' inquired the Princess.

"'He awaits you, madame,' replied the man, bowing respectfully.

"At this instant a valet appeared, and bidding him lead the way, the Princess ascended the steps and entered the *hôtel*. In a moment more she found herself in a richly furnished library, the walls of which were hung with costly tapestry. The Count was seated before a desk writing, but rose at once to greet his visitor. The scene was much the same in character as that which had transpired but a short time before in the boudoir of the lady. It was a complete *coup de théâtre*. At first the Princess appeared confused, but soon recovered her composure.

"'Do you not think it ungallant, Count de Poyen, to force a visit from a lady?' she inquired, contemptuously. 'Having acknowledged your courtesy I will now retire, as I am expected elsewhere.' And she turned toward the door.

"De Poyen intercepted her. His manner was determined and his look was sufficient to intimidate any woman less courageous than Olga de Vianzone.

"'To keep me here by force would be disloyal,' she said, haughtily. 'Moreover, if it be for revenge for my conduct toward you, believe me, it is, to say the least, in bad taste. What I did was wrong, but such an act as this, on your part, is infamous, and were it known in society, those who now pronounce you to be the soul of honor would soon accuse you of base cowardice.'

"The Count realized the justice of her reproach and had not the courage to detain her, still less to follow her as she swept from the room.

"Two hours later the Princess reached her home and entered her boudoir. Her cheeks were flushed with emotion. Seating herself on a couch she burst into tears. The pride that had sustained her in the presence of the man she loved gave way in the solitude of her own home. Suddenly and noiselessly a man entered the

room; it was de Poyen. Crossing softly to the couch, he knelt beside the Princess and gently raised her hand to his lips.

"'You here?' she exclaimed.

"'Yes,' responded de Poyen. 'Yes, Olga, for I have come to tell you that I love you.'

"'Love me!' she murmured, as her dark eyes flashed the contempt and doubt her voice expressed.

"'Yes, you and only you,' he continued, ardently. 'I have come to tell you that I love you, to ask to be forgiven.'

"A new light came into her eyes. 'I forgive you,' she whispered, placing her hand on his bowed head. 'I love you, Armand.'

"'I have said I love you,' continued de Poyen. 'For the sake of that love I have forgotten all else, have broken my vow to give it utterance. I am yours, Olga; do with me as you will.' As he spoke de Poyen embraced her, and yielding, her head sank on his breast. 'Have I hoped in vain?' whispered the Count, 'or is the boon of your love all my own?'

"The hand he held clung to his, and bending down he heard her whisper, softly, 'Yes.'

"The hour was very late when de Poyen left the *hôtel* of the Princess de Vianzone. There was a look of perfect happiness on his face as he hurriedly went his way homeward.

"The following day, as de Poyen was seated in his library arranging some papers, a note was brought him from the Princess. It contained, essentially, these words:

"MY DEAR ARMAND:

"Women, you know, are called the daughters of Eve. What name should we give men, who are termed our masters?—masters who by non-resistance prove themselves little better than slaves. How can man be the master of woman while he fails to resist her? But even while I ask the question I can hear you reply that it is man's non-resistance of woman that in the end renders her his slave, and so in truth it is. While we of the fair but frail race of beings hold ourselves proof against your lure of love, our triumph is complete;

but let one hour of weakness come, and yours is the victory. You are my conqueror, for I have confessed my love for you. The avowal from your lips, like a fairy charm, woke the inmost impulses of my heart. Like Pygmalion, you have animated your statue. In the marble veins flows new life, called forth by your gaze, your touch; and as Pygmalion of old knelt before his work and worshipped its wondrous beauty, so did you kneel at my feet and pour out your love, each word of which found its echo in my soul.

"I love you, my Armand, and know that the proof given me of your devotion was great. Fidelity shall recompense you. I, too, can be silent. No one shall know that you have broken your vow, but come to me, that in the quiet of my home I may again hear your voice and listen to your words of love.

"OLGA.

"De Poyen hesitated for a moment, then, after pressing the perfumed letter to his lips, he thrust it in his breast and wrote as follows:

"OLGA:

"I love you. This time I write the words that tell you my heart is all your own. I have been unfaithful to my oath, my beloved, and I will expiate my fault. Our destiny is such that all great happiness often becomes a fatality. I counted no cost too dear for the purchase of your love, and now that my life must pay the forfeit I bow submissively. I hold no regret in parting with life, save in separating myself from you. The poor gift of my existence I voluntarily bestow for the joy of your love. You knew not, my beloved, that as I held you to my heart and pressed my lips to yours my hours were numbered, that I, loving you with all the strength of a man's truest and most ardent passion, had sworn to sacrifice my life for the happiness of avowing my love. If our souls are immortal, so must memory be, as the rich gift emanates from the divine hand. On earth remember me, that in the great hereafter that lies beyond mortal sight we may be reunited. When you read these lines I shall have ceased to exist. With my last breath I will exclaim, 'Olga, I love you!' Adieu.

"ARMAND DE POYEN.

"Having finished the perusal of the letter the Princess at once ordered her carriage and drove with all speed.

to the Count's *hôtel*. Without a word of explanation she passed the servant who answered her summons, and at once hastened to the library. It was empty. She quickly crossed the room toward an adjoining apartment, and at that moment the sharp report of a pistol was heard. She flung open the door, and on the floor lay Armand de Poyen; in one hand he held a pistol, the other clasped a miniature. It was a picture of the Princess de Vianzone. His eyes were half-open, but in their sightless depths there was no recognition of the fair face that bent over him, and his white lips gave no answer to the voice that repeated again and again his name.

"Armand de Poyen had broken his oath, but by death he had redeemed, through endless silence, his dishonor.

"From that hour Olga de Vianzone pledged herself to perpetual mourning. Five years have passed, and still the somber garments adorn her lovely person. I have fulfilled my promise, and you now know why the Princess de Vianzone is called 'The Black Rose,'" said du Près, throwing away his cigar.

"An odd story," said Rousset, thoughtfully.

"True," continued du Près. "It may be that de Poyen carried his scruples too far, and yet, who may judge! To many, such an idea of honor may appear exaggerated, but with Armand it was not. It was in harmony with every trait of his character. I knew them both intimately, and may judge. The Princess you have seen, and can fancy her power. De Poyen was, in the full sense of the word, a man of chivalric honor; such a one, I freely grant, as is not often seen."

"Well, at all events, the costume of

the Princess is divinely becoming," responded Rousset. "But tell me, *mon ami*, do you really think her love was worth the sacrifice of life?"

"My dear fellow," continued du Près, "Olga de Vianzone is, I may say, one woman in ten thousand—such love is a very dream. Moreover, you must not forget that you are addressing a man to whom the risking of life has become habitual. I may be a poor judge. It appears to me, however, that to die for the full and perfect satisfaction of a great love is about as agreeable as any other kind of death."

"Why not live for that love?" urged Rousset.

"There's the rub," mused his listener. "Life teaches the sad experience that mortals may die for love, but if they persist in loving, they are too often punished by seeing love die. So which is better? For life without love is like a world without a sun. Give me plenty of love, and I will take my chances in the next life."

"What do you think of the sentiment that induced de Poyen to commit suicide?"

"Think! I think simply this, that moralists with a code about as frigid as the North Pole would blame him. But a true sense of honor, let it come in whatever shape it may, is, in these days, rare, so rare, indeed, that de Poyen has immortalized his name." As Colonel du Près uttered these words he descended the steps of the restaurant

"Where are you going?" inquired Rousset.

"To call on the Princess de Vianzone."

"So she loves you?"

"No, it is I who love her, my dear Rousset. Good-bve," he said, as he waved his hand in adieu.



THE MATINÉE GIRL

OLD MAN—Do you think you will be able to support my daughter?
 SUITOR—I do. It couldn't cost any more than courting her.

BACK IN TOWN

“THE melancholy days have come”—so sings the poet-fellow
 Who loafs about the dreary woods to watch the leaves turn yellow.
 Ah, foolish poet, while you prate of Autumn bare and brown,
 You miss the best thing of the year—the girls' return to town!

The liberty of men is gone; their car-seats now they offer,
 And maids accept, sometimes with thanks, the courtesy they proffer.
 But still the men are mighty glad, although they swear and frown,
 That Autumn's here and that the girls are once more back in town.

At every corner now one hears the merry maidens chatter
 Of gowns and men and frills—and *men*—how subtly women flatter!
 If you had walked Fifth Avenue, you stupid poet-clown,
 You ne'er would dub the Autumn sad; it brings the girls to town!

ELISABETH R. FINLEY.



STILL A FEW SPECIMENS

PARVENU (*proudly*)—I have every variety of cattle to be found in the world on my estate.

WITLEIGH—Not the Irish bull?

“Save that. I endeavored to secure it, but was told the only ones in existence were extinct.”



LAUDABLE AMBITION

SHE—Why is Grace going to marry Mr. Muchwed? He has already had three wives.

HE—I don't know. I suppose she's marrying him to reform him.



ACCORDING TO HABIT

BROWN—Can you tell me how your impecunious friend, Lord Deasy, can stand the expense of owning and running one of those electric vehicles?

SMYTHE—Same old way; has it charged.

LOVE BY LETTER

By Louis Pendleton

“I SAW your picture by accident at an uptown photographer’s,” wrote Barclay Vandenesse, “and a friend who was with me told me your name. I know all about your people, and you doubtless know something of mine, for we belong to the same stratum of society.

“That we have not met is due to accident and to the fact that I am not often seen in society. I do no more than show myself, now and then, at some crowded function, and even this is because I prefer not to be quite forgotten. I must confess that socially I am diffident, though were I otherwise I doubt if there would be enough entertainment in the wearisome evolutions called social duties to make them worth my while.

“I am not enamored of my own company, however, or satisfied with that of my own sex. I ardently desire to cultivate the friendship of a girl of strong character, but despair of being able to interest her in myself. If distinguished by neither a ready wit nor a striking appearance, what can a man do in the presence of a girl who is surrounded by handsome and clever admirers? I always feel that I make no impression, that to establish a friendly footing is impossible, and I pass on with a smile and a sigh. You are not to understand that I have ever loved hopelessly, but merely that I have ever been in love with loving. I could love only after an intimate acquaintance, and under our social conditions such an acquaintance seems impossible for a man of my temperament and unlucky characteristics.

“And now dare I confess to you

that your picture pleases me beyond my power to express, revealing rare beauty, rarer qualities of mind and heart and a nature at once strong and fine?

“‘Go, then, and try to win her, for there is no social nor other gulf between you,’ one of my few friends would say. I could not make it clear to him, but I hope I have made it clear to you that it would be useless to have myself presented to you at one of Mrs. Cadwalader Brown’s receptions; you would not waste on me a second glance. Were I thrown with you under exceptional circumstances and for a considerable period, it might be different; we should then come to know each other, and you might, after a time, see something in me to admire.

“Now, at the risk of your prompt refusal and of being pronounced crazy, I write to make an unusual proposition—that you will allow me to make myself known to you at first by letter. During an indefinite period I wish to write to you frequently, with the hope of letters from you in return. In this way you would know me better in two months than you would otherwise know me in two years. Such an experience, entered into in all seriousness on my part, may, on your side at least, prove amusing. I am aware that I run counter to the acknowledged proprieties, and that you have the right to charge me with impertinence, but I risk everything on the venture as my only hope.”

“Yes, I know who you are,” replied Miss Margaret Branchwater, “otherwise I should not even acknowledge the receipt of your ex-

traordinary letter. Extraordinary it is, but not laughable, though some people would think so. My friend, Mrs. Underwood, would call it the first chapter of 'The Romance of a Timid Young Man.' Others, I am sure, would pronounce you an impractical dreamer, if not a sensitive egoist. I do not say that you are either, for I think that I understand you. Judged by ordinary standards, your confession is the reverse of flattering to yourself. But ordinary standards are not always mine, and I have learned by observation that the kind of timidity and want of self-assertion to which you confess are sometimes displayed by the greatest souls.

"At any rate, your letter interests me more than the latest popular novel. And your plan attracts me—the more so because it is unconventional. I am something of a revolutionist, you see. I am also frank—too frank, perhaps. That is one reason why I am much less popular than you seem to suppose. When I go to a ball I am not compelled to talk to six men at a time. Divest yourself of that impression at once.

"Nor am I beautiful. Believe me, I am quite plain. Photographs are sometimes very deceptive, and mine has misled you. By the way, you are to send me yours at once. Now, having begun with this wholesome confession, I shall expect the most perfect frankness from you hereafter—if I have not frightened you, and there *is* to be a hereafter to this correspondence.

"If you are tongue-tied in society, you are glib enough with the pen. For such a person nothing is easier than the writing of fine sentiments. Now fine sentiments, like fine clothes, as you know, can be put on. Before all things let us be genuine. Whatever the subject, I wish you to write as you would speak to an intimate and trusted friend whom you could have no wish to deceive. If you fail to do this, I warn you that I shall not be slow to find you out. On this condition I consent."

"Frightened?" Vandenesse hastened to write. "On the contrary, I am captivated by your noble frankness, and if it rest with me the 'hereafter' is sure. A thousand delightful thoughts crowd on me at the prospect now opened. At last I can really make myself known to one whom already I recognize as—but this is perhaps going too fast. I shall obey you and express my real self, not the self which, as you say, I could easily, but not wisely, affect.

"I perceive, however, that in one particular you have not been frank; or, if you have, it merely proves that you are free from the small vanity of the ordinary woman. I refer to your assertion that you are 'quite plain'—meant perhaps to put me to a test. Have it as you will—your photograph tells a different story. Even without the assurance of this image of yourself I should feel convinced of your physical loveliness."

"If you insist on remaining deceived after a fair warning," wrote Miss Branchwater, toward the end of her second epistle, "be good enough not to forget that the responsibility is yours alone. As I have made frankness obligatory, I suppose I must confess that your picture pleases me. It may not be that of a handsome or distinguished-looking man in the ordinary sense, but—it pleases me."

Thus brought about, this unusual correspondence flourished amazingly. The letters of Vandenesse fell into the post thick and fast, and those of Miss Branchwater were scarcely less prompt. They discussed everything, each recognizing in the other a fine taste and a keen intelligence. Meanwhile, no absent lover's picture ever received more attention than did the photographs of these two persons. The affair advanced by leaps and bounds. Within a few weeks Vandenesse began to exhibit a dangerous warmth and Miss Branchwater a responsive though more guarded tenderness.

There are people, cautious by nature, who will say much, who will go

great lengths by word of mouth, but who become reserved and as careful as a lawyer when they write a letter. There are other people, usually people endowed with an imaginative temperament, who, speaking face to face, literally bottle themselves up, but who, with the pen in hand, fling restraint to the winds and open the very floodgates of such eloquence as may be theirs. To the latter class belonged the two adventurous persons who, as we have seen, chose to approach each other, as it were, blindfolded or through the dark, beholding each other only in the light of the imagination.

The day came when Vandenesse found himself writing to a woman whom he had never seen: "I exist only by the thought of you. I live on your utterances, and through them I see you as you are—the loveliest of womankind!" And Miss Branchwater responded: "I am old-fashioned enough to like embroidery. I tell you this because every stitch in every flower that takes shape under my hand is a word in a poem of which you are the hero."

Even such impassioned outpourings as these became unsatisfactory at last. Within less than three months after he wrote his first letter Vandenesse began to plead that they might see each other—not merely through the soul's eyes, but in the flesh, and not in society in the ordinary way, but where they might be alone. At this his correspondent showed some hesitation, as if a little afraid of that great day of meeting toward which both had been eagerly looking for weeks. But eventually she gave her consent and appointed the time and place.

"To-morrow, at half-past four exactly," she wrote, "I shall look for you on the Avenue. Stand with your back to the Square, looking up the Avenue. Wear a white hollyhock in your buttonhole. When I drive up in a carriage, stop and catch your eye, a motion of my hand will mean that you are to come forward and take your seat beside me."

Vandenesse reached the appointed place and took his position five minutes before the appointed time. The English sparrows engaged in exploring the trees of the Square were not more cheerful in appearance than he was in reality. He had won his princess and she was now on her way to him, not in charge of a dangerous Lancelot, but of a harmless liveried coachman. The setting was indeed less picturesque, but more satisfactory, because safe. Vandenesse already saw himself walking down the aisle of a church to receive his prize. He heard the peal of the organ, he saw the people stare—"How beautiful she is!" they whispered, almost awestruck. He was receiving congratulations and listening to compliments when brought back to his actual surroundings by the presence of a carriage, in which a lady was seated, not thirty feet from where he stood.

The great moment had arrived.

As Vandenesse approached the occupant of the carriage shuddered to observe that he was short of stature and that even the best tailor-made trousers did not disguise the fact that his legs were slightly bowed. With a sinking of the heart Miss Branchwater took note that the face, whose photographed copy she had secretly pronounced "noble," as seen in reality and the cruel light of day was insignificant and almost feminine in outline.

As for Vandenesse, his sensitive eye was literally shocked by what he saw before him. The lady's facial outlines were not unlike those of the treasured picture. She was tastefully dressed and young. But she was liberally freckled, her eyes were green and her hair was red.

Smiling vacantly, the lover walked forward like a machine, stepped into the carriage and subsided into his seat. Dreading to turn toward his companion, struck dumb, he could do no more than stare helplessly at the coachman's broad back as the carriage moved on.

She was the first to break that terrible silence.

"I see that you are as bitterly disappointed as I am." Her voice was unsteady, and looking round, he saw tears in her eyes.

"At all events we have not purposely deceived each other," he answered, softening at the sight—for there had been something akin to anger in his first surprise. "I have not forgotten that you gave me fair warning."

There was intense bitterness in the low laugh that greeted this. "Yes," she said, promptly, "each told the truth, and neither believed the other. But we are convinced now—" haughtily—"and—and some very plain speaking is necessary. To-day we return to the first hour of our correspondence. We stand toward each other now as if—all that had never been written."

"If you wish it—of course."

She saw his evident relief, and anger crept into her eyes.

"What else should I wish? Is it not as plain to me as to you that we have been feeding on imagination like two children playing with dolls? And now that we see each other, in spite of our boasted loyalty to inner perfections, we find that we are alike in worshipping those external graces that we do not possess."

"I fear so, though I would not have believed it till this moment." It struck him as he spoke that, though this woman did not please the eye, her speech possessed a charm for the mind.

"I shall put you down at the next corner," she told him, desperately, after a moment's silence. "I must be alone to think." She did not add that she felt weak from excess of emotion.

It was just before the carriage stopped that he said to her, with a smile: "A friend of mine, who felt sure that he knew, once told me that in the future world the wisest and the best are the most beautiful, the outer form there being a corresponding projection or outflowing of the inner quality. Perhaps—if we try to be very good—in another life each of

us may be more pleased with the other's appearance than we are to-day."

"Had I not already declared everything at an end between us," she retorted, smiling faintly, "I should promptly accept the suggestion that our engagement be deferred until this wonderful metamorphosis occurs."

"But in the meantime," he turned to say, after stepping on the pavement, "we may remain friends, may we not? For unless—unless your conversation is to take the place of your letters there will be a great blank in my life."

At this she flashed him a bright look, and somehow he was suddenly convinced that, though green, her eyes were fine. They now found themselves looking at each other steadily for the first time since the terrible moment of encounter. Unconsciously each made a slight revision of the first impression.

Though she was unquestionably far from beautiful, Vandenesse began to perceive in her atmosphere something pleasing, lovely, a flavor of womanly gentleness that belied the sharpness of her speech. There was a distinction about her, too, and certainly there were becoming lights in her uncommon eyes. As for Miss Branchwater, what she had at first pronounced "almost effeminate" in his face she now recognized as a peculiar refinement of outline, a tinge of melancholy and an atmosphere of self-renunciation that might indeed be called weak by the man disposed at all times to thrust himself forward, but that in a deeper sense meant strength.

The situation was still felt to be tragical, but they could at least look at each other without positive pain—now that the foolish dream was passed. Why, therefore, might they not become friends? So thought each after that less trying second survey. Nevertheless she showed signs of real or feigned hesitation.

"You won't promise even that?" he urged.

"Yes—we may remain friends, if it is quite understood that the friendship is to be purely platonic."

"Of course. We have agreed to defer the other relationship until after the metamorphosis, you remember."

A year later, however, they con-

cluded not to wait so long. And whether their eyes were or were not anointed in their sleep with the love-juice distilled from the fairy Oberon's milk-white flower, strange to say each is now absolutely and happily unconscious of any lack of external beauty in the other.



YET SHE KEEPS IT

'TIS strange she keeps her age so well—
A boon Time seldom will permit—
When anyone can easily tell
She'd like much to get rid of it.



THE LETTER-BOX

I AM invited out to dine at six o'clock. What is the proper time to arrive?

CHOLLY BASHFUL.

Six o'clock, if you want to get the dinner.

When descending to dinner, is it proper form to precede or allow the lady to go first?

GEORGIE NICEBOY.

It all depends on whether you are hungry or not.

If I want to go to a reception, and it is raining, but there are signs of clearing, would you advise me to take my umbrella?

SOROSIS.

Certainly not; you can get an umbrella at the reception without any trouble.

Is it proper to wear gloves at an afternoon reception?

CLARENCE.

Yes; four-ounce gloves.

Would you advise a "spanker" in a ten-knot breeze?

WILLY YACHTER.

Not unless the crew was naughty.



HON. \$\$\$\$\$, D.D., LL.D., D.C.L., ETC.

"THERE is no royal road to learning."
"No; even Carnegie gets there only by degrees."

SPEAKIN' OF MEN

"I SEE," said old Aunt Grimm, speaking in the midst of the assemblage of maids and matrons gathered at the residence of Mrs. Judge Tubman with the laudable purpose of manufacturing amelioration for the condition of the undone and trouserless heathen in certain far-off and anonymous islands, "that there has been a discussion goin' the rounds of the papers of late as to whether or not women have robbed men of their religion.

"I take the negative side of the question most emphatically, and I guess I am about as competent to express an intelligent opinion on the subject as the next lady, no matter where you find her, bein' as I have buried three average husbands in my time, as well as one that I must confess fell a whole lot below the regulation standard; and I therefore flatter myself that I am about as well acquainted with the ordinary or domestic variety of man as if I had been clear through him with a lighted lantern.

"The average man thinks he is the embodiment of knowledge, and that when he dies Wisdom will be buried with him. He actually seems to have the egotism to believe that when he goes down cellar the sun quits business for the time bein'. Before marriage he swears he will love you forever; after marriage he simply swears. He is infested with the idea that marriage is a lottery in which women win all the prizes. After observin' the usual sort of man for any considerable length of time, a sensible woman can scarcely help thinkin' so little of him that the more

she thinks of him the less she thinks of him. Of course, there are exceptional men—there are also white blackberries.

"Most men want the earth and the perpetual privilege of trackin' it in on your freshly scrubbed kitchen floor. The man that swears he would willin'ly die for a woman always mentally reserves the right to die of old age. The only man I ever knew to die for love starved to death after bein' refused by an heiress. The average man is both a success and a failure—he is a success as a failure and a failure as a success—and then he has the face and impudence to declare that his wife made him all that he is. The ordinary man, no matter if he is as homely and rickety as an old saw-horse, secretly cherishes the sneakin' hope that some beautiful adventuress will come along and turn his head, when usually, as a matter of fact, the first woman that turned his head would twist it clear off. About all of the really indulgent husbands I have ever known were those that seldom came home sober. They indulged entirely too much. Somebody once summed up men by sayin' that a man is merely a gorilla with a conscience, but I am of the opinion that the great majority of 'em are just plain gorillas.

"I say all this to show where I get my belief that women haven't robbed men of their religion, for the simple reason that I don't think they ever had any to be robbed of, and also to quiet the hints that have been flyin' around for the last few weeks to the effect that I am anxious to marry again."

TOM P. MORGAN.



THE PRINCESS OF LILIES

By Justus Miles Forman

LIVINGSTON absent-mindedly knocked out the ashes of his pipe on the recumbent form of Marcus Aurelius, who, after a moment's growling hesitation, decided to ignore the insult and resume his nap. Then Livingston wandered reluctantly over to the writing desk.

"Those letters have got to be done some time," he said, in a resentful tone, and sat down with a little sigh. He arranged some note paper and began:

*No. 83 Boulevard Montparnasse,
Paris.*

DEAREST:

I've been thinking of you all night and all day till I must write to you or go mad. . . .

It would never do to go mad, so he wrote steadily till he had covered some four or five sheets. He read them over with genuine pride.

"That'll do for Sibyl," he said, and began afresh:

*No. 83 Boulevard Montparnasse,
Paris.*

DEAREST:

I've been thinking of you all night and all day till I must write to you or go mad. . . .

This one was easier, for he could simply copy the first. Still, there were certain allusions and reminiscences that had to be changed to fit the recipient. It would be very indiscreet to confuse them.

After the third letter the glow of conscious virtue made him thirsty, and he treated himself to a glass of maraschino and a biscuit before beginning the fourth.

Just then Jimmy Rogers came in

and fell over Marcus Aurelius, who promptly acknowledged the attention, and let go only when Livingston seized him by his rudimentary tail and hauled him across the room.

"What in Gehenna are you about?" demanded Jimmy Rogers; "writing a novel?" He bent over the imposing heap of manuscript and noted the three introductions.

"You ought to buy a mimeograph," he said, unkindly; "it would save you work. I'd trade that dog for one, if I were you, though you would probably have to pay a bonus. I don't know to whom all those letters are written," he proceeded, indignantly, "but if there are three girls each foolish enough to think she is the only one you make love to, they—they—well, they deserve it. I can't say anything stronger."

He helped himself to maraschino and spilled a large quantity of it over one of the letters, whereupon Livingston cursed him so viciously and eloquently that he sank gasping on the divan, and quite forgot the liqueur glass in his hand.

"Oh, very well!" said he. "If you're in such a nasty temper I shall go away. I came in to tell you something."

"Don't tell it," said Livingston, rudely; "if it's as silly as most of the things you have to tell I'm better without it. Keep it, you may need it some time. I'll have to write a whole sheet of that letter all over again."

Jimmy Rogers strolled haughtily out of the studio, and Livingston sat down at the desk once more and took up a pen.

"Dearest," he began, "I've been

thinking of you all night and all day till I must write to you or go mad—" and he groaned wearily.

But Jimmy Rogers, out in the sunshine of the Place de Rennes, swung on to the step of a "St. Germain des Prés-Clamart" tram, and mounted to the impériale as it turned the corner from the Rue de Rennes and rolled down the Boulevard toward the Rue de Sèvres.

The dial up under the tower of the Gare Montparnasse said two o'clock.

"It will take about three-quarters of an hour," said Jimmy, and filled his pipe.

"Maybe she doesn't like the smell of tobacco, though," he considered, with the match poised in the air. "Oh, well, she'll have to stand it!" and he lighted the pipe. "Heaven send she's there!" he murmured, piously.

The tram swung into the Rue de Sèvres and rolled smoothly out that long, uninteresting stretch, far out to where the houses became scattered, where mounds and pyramids of red tiles guarded the factory sheds, where an acre of little glass hemispheres in long, straight rows winked and glistened in the afternoon sun, the forcing beds of some market gardener; out to the Porte d'Issy at the city wall, where a group of customs officers sprawled at ease before their little sentry box or loafed over to inspect an incoming tram.

A bugle sounded and a drum beat from the great *fosse* under the wall, and a company of *piou-pious*, red-capped and red-trousered, shambled through their evolutions, "for all the world like a herd of morphined swine," commented Jimmy from the top of the tram. Then out past level fields to little Vanves, with its steep streets and its old gray church, past the splendid grounds of the Lycée beyond, where a troop of silly little boys led by a long-cassocked but very spry priest were kicking a football about aimlessly.

"Football!" sneered Jimmy. "You little girls ought to play 'Puss in the Corner' or 'Who's Got the Mitten?'"

—that's what you ought to play. It's more your style. Football!"

Nearing Clamart the road wound through double rows of chestnuts in bud, past little detached villas of brick and stucco, each with its miniature garden in front, with its lilacs just bursting into bloom and peeping over the garden hedge. On the right was a great wall. It might have been half a mile long, backing what seemed at first sight an immense park; but looking closely one saw, at wide intervals, other walls running down to meet the first, and caught glimpses through the trees of big, square, old-fashioned houses.

Jimmy Rogers sat up and watched. In a moment there came into view a little rustic Summer-house, a mere bower, set among the trees near the high street wall. To one driving or walking along the road it would be quite hidden, but the great elevation of the tram's top brought it into sight. Something white gleamed in the Summer-house. Jimmy Rogers climbed down from the impériale and swung off the car. He sauntered along by the roadside till the tram had disappeared, then looking swiftly about him made for a little postern door in the wall. The door was unlatched.

He stood at the foot of the steps that led into the Summer-house, and smiled upward.

"It is you, monsieur!" cried the girl, with dramatic astonishment. "I—I am amazed!"

"You knew perfectly well it was I," said Jimmy. "You saw me on the tram." The girl seemed pained. "No, you didn't, either!" he cried, contritely. "Mademoiselle, you had no idea that it was I! You didn't even know that I was in the neighborhood! You—you are shocked and grieved at seeing a strange man in your park—a foreign barbarian, too! Your heart is—is fluttering with terror, mademoiselle, at this very moment!"

The girl laid an experimental hand—a beautiful hand, slim and white and pink-tipped—on her breast, and

sighed. "Yes," she murmured. Alas! it fluttered—such a foolish heart! "Will the—the foreign barbarian come up? It must hurt your neck, keeping it bent back that way."

The barbarian mounted the steps. "I was in some pain," he admitted. "Not from bending my head back, but from being at such a distance. I have been in pain ever since yesterday afternoon, acute most of the time." He beamed cheerfully at the girl under the white hat. "I feel better now," said he.

"That is a comfort," murmured the girl. She looked past him, out over the country that fell away below them in a great sweeping hollow, rose to little hillocks, and then swept on again evenly to meet the blue sky. "The fruit trees are nearly out of blossom," she mourned—"the peaches and the cherries and the plums and the apples. A week ago all that stretch was a mass of white. It was wonderful. In a week more there won't be any white left."

"Ah, but in a week more," he protested, "the lilacs will be in full flower. They're commencing now—one can smell them. In a week all the air will be heavy with perfume. And directly after, the chestnuts will be out. You shouldn't complain."

"Ah, no," she sighed, "I've no reason to complain. It's all very beautiful, isn't it?"

"It is," said Jimmy, with conviction. He was looking at the girl's face. "White," said he, "living white, the creamiest white in all the world, with a bit of a blue vein here and there. And higher up a stain of red showing through, and above it all brown—no, red, by Jove! coppery red. Yes, it's extremely beautiful."

"The chestnuts?" inquired the girl. "But there isn't any coppery red about chestnut blossoms."

"No, not chestnuts." Then the stain of red spread all over the beautiful face, from neck to coppery hair.

"I was discussing flowers," said the girl, with dignity.

"So was I," insisted Jimmy.

Then, after a pause: "I—I was

afraid you mightn't come to-day," she murmured.

"Afraid? Then you wanted me to come!"

"Oh, no! oh, no! Did I say 'afraid?' No, I didn't want you to come. I am angered at your presumption, monsieur."

Jimmy sighed piteously. "What made you think I wouldn't come back?" he demanded.

"Oh, I don't know. Do bold, forward young men who catch a glimpse of little girls playing about in their parks, and who come and storm the park walls and make the little girls talk to them, do they generally come back? No, they don't. They forget the little girls, or meet other girls."

"Why did you let me talk to you yesterday?" he asked. "Why didn't you scream and run when I climbed over the wall? Don't you know it was very improper of you?"

"I thought it would be a lark," she confessed. "It was a lark. And then, too, I knew by your look you weren't French. If you had been French I should have screamed and run. Why did you climb the wall?"

"I had seen your face," said Jimmy.

The crimson spread up again to meet the coppery hair. "I'm glad you climbed the wall," she breathed. "I'm glad." Then, presently: "It—it is a little awkward," she complained; "I don't know what to call you; 'monsieur' is so—formal; no?"

"Oh, my name is Rogers," said he, "Jimmy Rogers. At least, that's what people have always called me. Properly it's James Mozart Rogers. Silly name, 'Mozart,' isn't it? Musical chap, who wrote operas and all that. I don't know what operas."

"He wrote 'Don Giovanni,'" said the girl, severely, "and you know it perfectly well. It's not a silly name at all. But 'Jeemmee!' No, I cannot say that. It is barbarous. I must call you something else." She looked at him meditatively. "I am very fond of the name 'Angelo,'" she ventured. "I—I had a monkey once of that name, *un petit singe*

gris. I loved him dearly. You—you wouldn't mind taking his name?"

"Not if I felt that I could fill his place," said Jimmy, gravely. "I fear the monkey's reputation will be a good deal to live up to."

"Perhaps, yes, but you can at least begin. I shall almost feel that I have him back."

"I am grateful," answered Jimmy. "Still," he pursued, "'Angelo' is hardly a monkey's name. It is better suited to a—a prince."

"Ah, yes," she cried, softly, "the Prince Charming who comes riding into the castle—I mean over the wall—to wake the sleeping, the sleeping—"

"Beauty," said Jimmy Rogers.

"Oh, no; I—I didn't mean that I was— Oh, I'm not beautiful!"

"You force me to the rudeness of disputing a lady's word," said he, regretfully. "Didn't I tell you yesterday, with some detail, that you were the most beautiful thing I ever saw?"

"Did you?" she asked; "I had forgotten. Ah, no, no, I hadn't, either. You know very well I hadn't. But you might say it all over again—please don't omit anything! Perhaps," she suggested, hopefully, "perhaps you have thought of some more in the meantime."

The presence in the shrubbery below, of which Jimmy had been for some time vaguely and uncomfortably conscious, resolved itself into an obsequious and perturbed lackey, who cringed at the foot of the steps and made confused sounds, out of which an occasional "Mademoiselle" found its way upward.

"*Mais comment donc!*" cried the girl, haughtily.

A deep flush overspread the lackey. "*Mille pardons, votre Altesse,*" he murmured.

It appeared that *son Altesse Sérénissime* up in the château was of the opinion that the afternoon was growing cold for *son Altesse*, her daughter.

"You will say to her Serene Highness," observed the girl, "that I am at present engaged."

"*Bien, votre Altesse,*" faltered the

crushed lackey, and disappeared. But Jimmy Rogers still felt vaguely the unseen presence in the shrubbery below, as if the two were being watched.

"Why did that fellow call you 'your Highness?'" he demanded. "That is a title given to princesses."

The girl lifted her shoulders and smiled.

"But I say!—a princess! Good Lord! But you're French, aren't you?"

"*Naturellement.*"

"Then I'm blest if I— Why, then, what are you princess of?"

"Ah, that I mustn't tell you." She threw back her head and smiled at him out of the tawny eyes that matched her hair. "Have I no realm at all?" she grieved.

"By heaven," he cried, "you have, though, on my soul, it isn't much!"

"It's enough!" whispered the Princess.

"But really, you know," said Jimmy, after a pause, "isn't it a bit rash for even a princess to be entertaining strange young men alone in her back garden when her mother knows about it? They'll be coming down here with a gendarme and a half-dozen grooms to turn me out!"

The Princess raised a pointed little chin some distance into the air.

"I am accustomed," she said, with gentle hauteur, "to do very much as I please."

"Oh!" said Jimmy.

"However," she admitted, presently, "it is growing cold, and you must go. But ah, come back to-morrow, my Prince! come back to-morrow!"

That evening Jimmy Rogers, as was his custom, dined with Livingston at Boulant's. Livingston had finished and posted his four letters, and the consequent relaxation had put him into an excellent humor.

"What did you come to the studio this afternoon to tell me?" he asked.

"I remember I insulted you about it at the time, but you shouldn't have spilled maraschino on my letter."

"It was something curious that had happened to me," said Jimmy; "but it has happened again, and I've decided not to tell it. I thought it was a lark. I'm not so sure now that it isn't something rather different."

"Oh, very well," remarked Livingston, "don't tell, then! Of course it's a girl. But allow me to say that your smirk annoys me. You look like a pleased cat. Also, these sudden scruples are a bit overwhelming. Are you sure you're quite well?"

"No," said Jimmy, "I'm not."

As soon as he entered the little postern gate in the wall the fragrance reached him, filled his head. At the foot of the steps it was like a church at Easter. The Summer-house was a bower of Easter lilies. They had been set about the little shelter, in their pots, a hedge of them. The girl was enthroned like a *reine des fleurs*.

"My Princess of Lilies!" said Jimmy Rogers over the slim cool hand that she gave him.

"Are they not perfect?" cried the girl. "I had them brought down from the Winter garden. They are what I love more than anything else in the world."

"Now that the monkey is gone," murmured Jimmy.

The girl leaned back in her seat till she was framed in lilies. Her face with its exquisite flush lay among them like a rose.

Jimmy took a long breath of sheer delight. "My Princess of Lilies!" he cried again, inwardly.

She drew a flower toward her, held it to her face, smiled into it adorably, touched it with her lips as if it were human.

"Do you know what these are?" she said. "These are souls, souls without bodies. Peoples' souls, inside them somewhere—" she laid a hand vaguely on her breast—"are like these. Aren't they? Don't you think so, my Prince?"

His face was rather flushed, too.

"Oh—oh, yes, I dare say. Yours is, I know. Mine—well, you see, I'm afraid mine isn't quite pale enough—sort of tiger-lily, perhaps. I've hopes of it, though—lately."

She shook her head at him.

"*Vous plaisantez!*" she chided. "Moreover—" with a curious little smile—"you don't know what I know. You haven't been where I've been. Ah, yes you have, too! but I don't believe you remember. Do you remember, Angelo *mio*? Do you?" She waved a hand vaguely to the sweep of open fields that slept under the afternoon sun. "Do you remember our lily county, out—out there—and me?"

Jimmy Rogers stared out over the stretch of fading fruit trees, of budding leaves. He half-expected to find some sudden miraculous change there. Then he turned back quickly to the girl's glowing face and looked into her eyes with a puzzled frown.

"I don't understand," said he; "are you joking?"

She shook her head at him again.

"He doesn't remember!" she cried, "this great, stupid man—no, he isn't stupid, he's—he's a sort of dear—but he doesn't remember." She nodded to the broad, sunlit fields. "Do you see that little gray-stone house?" said she, "far over there on the last hill? Do you see the two poplar trees, Lombard poplars, beside it? That's the gate to my lily county. Over the hollow fields and gardens, across the brook and up the hill, and then—away from all this daytime world, through the gate of my land!"

"When," asked Jimmy Rogers, frowning still at the flushed, eager face and bright eyes, "when do you go—out there?"

"Night times!" cried the girl. "Night times, when everything is dark and still, when *Madame son Altesse Sérénissime* is asleep in her bed, and Marie Fifine, my maid, is asleep. Then I steal out—oh, very softly, not to waken anyone. It is dark—so dark! But I gain the little gray house and the poplar trees and the

gate of my land. Ah, then it's light with sunshine, Angelo *mio*, warm, golden sunshine that reaches the heart and thrills it with comfort; and all my lily people crowd about me! Oh, the fragrance, my Prince! the keen, rich fragrance! It steals into one's blood, makes it leap and sing, makes one's head light! Angelo, Angelo! to lie on the green grass among my lily people, under the golden sun! to hear their voices, feel their cool touch, fill one's self with their fragrance! Ah, there I'm a queen, Angelo! no princess, a queen—a queen! And then, besides—besides—you came to me there."

"I?" he cried, sharply, "I? What do you mean? You're joking!" He stared anxiously into the wide, bright eyes that looked beyond him. He felt a little uncomfortable. The thing was growing a bit out of his reach.

"*Mais si*, you, Angelo! Ah, he doesn't remember, this great man! Listen, and I'll tell you. It was one day, oh, long ago, ages ago, that you first came, nearly a year, I think. I was there, out there in the sunshine with my lily people. They were making garlands and chains for my hair out of little white flowers. They were calling and laughing round me, my lily folk, chattering at the tops of their beautiful voices, and from the fields and little hills beyond I could hear the others at play, calling to each other, singing little sweet songs that the breeze carried to me in snatches. And then—and then, all at once, there came a queer murmur from very far away, growing nearer, a murmur that died into a hush. And the lily people about me hushed, too, till I began to be frightened, just the least bit in the world. It was growing strange. I looked round, and in a breath all the people that had been talking to me weren't people any more but just lilies, tall white lilies with green stems, that swayed with the breeze and glistened in the sunlight. Then—you came, Angelo *mio*, you, up through ranks of lilies, head and shoulders above them, with that look on your face that—that I've never

been able to forget. How wonderful I thought you were! Ah, how wonderful! You came straight to me, and looked me in the eyes, and—and—oh, I can't tell you any more—I—I haven't words. It was all very beautiful the—the things you said, and—did. My heart—my foolish, foolish little heart simply fell down and worshiped, quivered and throbbed with something it had never felt before. Ah, well, you came again, Angelo, oh, many, many times, almost every day—night, I mean. If only I could tell about it—if only there were words! Ah, those lily fields of ours!"

"Then you recognized me," said Jimmy Rogers, "the other day on the tram? That was why you let me come over the wall and talk to you?"

She glanced up at him with a little shamefaced smile.

"But yes, my Angelo! You see, I—I didn't tell the truth yesterday when you asked me. I said it was for a—a lark. It wasn't a lark. I knew you in a moment. Knew you? Oh, I should think so! And you don't remember? Oh, you man, you man!"

Jimmy frowned out over the hollow fields to the little gray house on the hill and the two Lombard poplars that were the gate of dreams. He felt vaguely and uncomfortably that, as he would have phrased it, it was up to him; that he must say something, rise to the occasion, but he could not seem to rise at all. You see, he was just a normal, healthy, out-of-door young man with no imaginative fancy. Moreover, he was in love, and that is enough to tongue-tie anyone. He looked into the girl's radiant face with a deprecatory smile.

"Have you been—er—out—out—there recently?" he asked. It struck him as a singularly idiotic thing to say.

The girl looked distressed. "Not last night," she said, shaking her head, "nor the night before. I tried, oh, I tried, Angelo, so hard, but I couldn't go. I kept waking up all night long, waking just when I was about to start away, and there would be the room dark as ever, with the

little night lamp back of its screen and the lilies nodding in the draught by the window, just lilies, not changed to people as they ought to have been. I don't know what was the matter, I—well, it would have broken my heart if I hadn't known that you would come the next day. When I thought of that the other didn't so much matter—I could lie awake thinking of—of things. Still, I wonder what was wrong."

There was the slightest rustling in the shrubbery below, the faintest crackling of twigs. Jimmy caught a fleeting glimpse of white. It might have been the cap and apron of a servant or the mere flutter of a wind-blown paper. He leaned over to the girl.

"Do you know," he said, "I've a sort of notion that we are being watched. I thought so yesterday and the day before. I believe there is someone among the shrubs down there."

The girl faced about quickly and scanned the bushes for an instant.

"Nonsense!" she cried, a bit haughtily. "Who would dare spy upon us? I thought I told you yesterday, my Prince, that I am accustomed to do very much as I choose." Then she faced him with an adorable little smile. "Don't let us bother about other people," she murmured. "Aren't we two enough to think of?"

"The mind of a young girl," said Jimmy Rogers, that night at dinner—"I mean the sort of young girl that is brought up in a convent and has never been to a dance or to the theatre or anything, and doesn't know any world outside her own garden—is—is a curiously fantastic thing. It's a flower—a lily," he added, rather guiltily.

Livingston smiled. Then he took a gulp of "Corton" and smiled again, at great length.

"Ah!" said he, comprehensively.

Jimmy scowled.

"How is it—er—progressing?" inquired Livingston. "Do you think I would fancy her?"

"You annoy me!" said Jimmy.

Two days afterward he kissed her hands. He had been meaning to for some time but had been seized with a deadly fright every time it seemed possible. When at last he kissed them the girl turned all at once very pale, then crimson, then pale again, and clasped the hands at her breast, breathing quickly. He kissed them again where they lay. His heart seemed to have neglected most recklessly its proper duties and to be doing quite absurd things in places where it did not belong at all.

The girl wept a little, but not, it would seem, from grief.

"I was—I was sad this morning," she breathed, through slim, pink fingers, "because I couldn't go—any more—to my lily county. I can never get started—lately. I don't think I mind—so much, now. I don't seem to care any more about—those things. Angelo, you—you may—kiss them again if you want to!"

Then a week later he kissed her—properly, where one ought to be kissed. Her lips parted and quivered and clung to his. Her cheeks flushed burning. And again she wept a little, but not, it would seem, from grief.

"I—I have been kissed before," whispered the girl, very unsteadily.

"What!" cried Jimmy Rogers.

"By my mother."

"Oh!"

"But not—not like that," she added, hastily. "You seem to—know better how. You must have kissed a great many girls!" accusingly.

"I swear to you—" cried Jimmy.

"No, don't tell me lies. I shouldn't believe them, you know. Perhaps—perhaps I'd rather you had kissed other girls—a few—if you will never, never do so again. You may swear that if you like. Maybe that is why you do it so—Oh!—"

"And to think," said Jimmy, after a very long time, "that all this comes of my having, out of sheer ennui, taken a ride to Clamart one day on top of a tram!"

The girl laughed deliciously and

stretched out an arm to him. Her elbow broke the stem of a lily. "Oh, dear," she said, absently, "I've broken a flower! Such a pretty one, too!" She held the lily to her face, sniffed it, and acquired a wholly unnecessary decoration of yellow on the tip of her pretty nose.

"A fortnight ago," observed Jimmy, "you'd have died of grief at the idea of killing one of your—your lily people."

The girl made a face. "Oh," said she, with scorn, "those dreams? I was a child then," and she dropped the broken flower to the ground.

"I take it," he ventured, "that you haven't been over—yonder, of late." But the girl spread out her two hands beside her as if to put away all such unprofitable discussion, and leaned over toward him, smiling into his eyes with a little contented sigh.

"What does all that foolishness matter?" she said. "I've no dreams or thoughts that aren't of you—nothing else is of any importance. How did you come to care about me? I like your name for me," she murmured, after a little, "Princess of Lilies. 'Princess!' How did you happen to call me 'Princess?'"

"Why, you are—you—you said," he stammered, looking at her curiously, "you are a princess!"

She hid a flushed face where—where it seemed to belong.

"If you say so, dearest of everything," she cried, "then I am a princess."

Jimmy Rogers was so utterly impossible that evening at dinner that Livingston, once the repast was over, forsook him on the threshold of Boulant's, and jumping into a *fiacre*, drove across the river in a nimbus of indignant blasphemy to the Taverne Royale, where he sat till midnight listening to the Spanish orchestra and brooding over his woes—and a great many glasses of Grand Marnier. His chum spent these hours—and many more—walking up and down the Avenue de l'Observatoire,

making silly speeches to a star-strewn sky, asking it questions, and painting on the night's gloom a certain rose-flushed face that smiled and softened, certain violet eyes immeasurably deep that shone with a love immeasurably great, certain drooping lips that curved and quivered adorably and hair that had a fragrance like the thousands of white chestnut cones in the dark above him. He walked and raved till the dawn was gray.

Shortly before three the next afternoon he opened the little postern gate in the wall and closed it carefully behind him. Then as he turned about he fell back a step with a quick exclamation.

"Ah, it's come, has it?" said he. "Well, it was inevitable. Here's for it!" and he sauntered toward the man who stood under the trees, removing his hat on the way. He noted with a side glance that there was no one in the little Summer-house.

"It—er—it's a fine day," said he, originally. He spoke, from instinctive feeling, in English. He was certain that the middle-aged gentleman in the frock coat was Scotch. The middle-aged gentleman favored him with a glance of the keenest scrutiny.

"Oh—er—yes, yes, quite so!" he agreed at last. He seemed a bit embarrassed, a bit at a loss about how he should proceed.

"Look here, sir," said Jimmy at last, "I know, of course, what you want to talk to me about, and it may surprise you to hear that I am quite as anxious for the interview as you can be. I don't know," he went on, interrogatively, "what relation you bear to the—the young lady who is—the cause of our meeting—"

"You may say a friend of the family," returned the other. "Yes, a friend of the family. Mademoiselle's father is not living."

"Thank you. Now of course I know well enough, sir, as well as you can tell me, that the series of inter-

views I have had with—her Highness—” the Scotchman’s eyebrows rose—“were, though innocent, on my word of honor, indiscreet to a phenomenal degree. They were undertaken in fun, perhaps, but they have become a very serious matter. I ask your assistance, sir, in making, to the proper persons, a proposal for the hand of her Highness in marriage. Oh, I know—” he hurried on as the other would have spoken—“I know all you would say about the difference in rank, but this is the twentieth century, sir, not the fifteenth. A gentleman may propose marriage to any woman not royal. I take it her Highness’s title is not a royal one. I am an American, sir; I have no title, no rank; but in my own country, and perhaps in England, my people are of some consequence, and I have quite enough means to offer her Highness the sort of luxury to which she has been accustomed. Further than that, I—I can only say that I—love her very dearly, and I believe she cares for me. Forget the—the indiscreet manner of our meeting, sir, and tell me that I’ve your good will.”

The Scotchman laid a hand on Jimmy’s shoulder and looked into his eyes.

“You are a young man,” said he, “and a somewhat reckless one, but I believe honorable. Indeed, the proposal to which I have just listened makes me sure of that. I don’t defend your garden-wall fashion of wooing, mind you, but you say you are an American. One must, of course, make allowances for that. I understand there is a great freedom allowed young people out there. Moreover, I may as well admit in the beginnin’ that your interviews with—mademoiselle were watched.”

“Ah, I thought so!” said Jimmy.

“They were allowed to continue, under surveillance, only at my earnest request. Mademoiselle’s mother was naturally—er—alarmed.”

“You say ‘mademoiselle.’”

The Scotchman looked into the young man’s eyes kindly, a bit sadly,

and gave a little pressure to the hand on his shoulder.

“That brings us,” said he, “to the point. I wish it were unnecessary to tell you what I am about to tell. I said that I was a friend of the family,” he went on. “That is perfectly true; but what I did not tell you is that I am—a physician, an alienist. Wait, wait! The lady for whom you have formed an—attachment is not a princess. She has no title whatever, though her mother is the daughter of a marquis. The young lady has been for some years a victim of the hereditary insanity of which her father died!”

“Great God!” cried Jimmy, fiercely, “it’s a lie! Insane? Why, man, you’re mad yourself! That girl—my—my Princess insane! It’s nonsense! I won’t believe it! I——”

But the Scotchman gripped him by the shoulder and shook his gray head.

“My name’s Mackenzie,” said he, as if by way of proof. “Come, me dear chap,” he cried, “we’re both men. I see no good in beatin’ about the bush. Come, buck up, buck up! I didn’t say she was mad now—I said she had been. I made them allow her her stolen meetin’s with you because I thought a love affair, so long as it was innocent, was her only hope—a complete mental reorganization, as it were. And, by me soul, man, I believe you’ve cured her! Only, look you, there must be no sudden shocks, no mental strains. At the moment I believe her to be as sound in mind as you or I, but give her a shock, give her a keen sorrow or disappointment, and I won’t answer for consequences. She might destroy herself. Above all, she must never find out she’s been mentally at sea. That would be worst of all. The two of you are young and happy. Watch over her; keep her in peace of mind, and I’ll guarantee the pair of you a long life.”

Jimmy Rogers sighed wearily. He was thinking, as his mind came out with a painful wrench from the first storm of shock and horror and protest, thinking of the lily people, of

the little gray house on the outermost hill, and the two Lombard poplars that were the gate of dreams; thinking of the girl's strange wide eyes and flushed cheeks as she told about the county beyond the poplar trees.

"And if she—finds out?" he asked, in a dull voice.

"Me friend," said the alienist, "that is on the knees of the gods. She mustn't find out."

There was a flutter of white far up the garden path between the trees. The Scotchman stepped back into cover.

"*Tiens!*" cried the Princess of Lilies, at the steps of the Summerhouse, "I am late—and I tried so hard not to be! I am desolated!" she averred, tragically.

"Thank you," said Jimmy.

"*Ah, mais non!*" she laughed, "I didn't mean that—quite. I *was* desolated. *A ce moment-ci—*" She held his shoulders with her small hands, crushed against him, lifted a pink face that blushed and tempted—"je suis tout à fait contente." Then presently, panting a little for breath, "Why don't you say something?"

"I can't do two things at once," he complained.

"Oh, well," hastily, "of course I shouldn't insist on your talking *too* much. I mustn't stop long to-day," she mourned. "An aunt, a stupid aunt, is coming to make a visit, and I must go up to the house and help receive her. *Vieille chatte!*" she added, venomously.

Doubtless Jimmy Rogers will never forget, though he live to a green age, the little half-hour spent that beautiful afternoon of Spring with his Princess of Lilies. The agony of horror that he must not show, the shivering dread of what any future day might bring that not a glance nor a hastened breath nor an unsteady hand must betray, the instinctive shrinking that is in every normal human being before the mentally unsound—all these were in a fury of conflict with a love that had grown to be everything in life to him.

And he must smile and look into her eyes, touch her cool hands and talk of their future.

It was not a pleasant half-hour.

But mercifully, as he talked to her, as he watched the flush start in her cheeks and spread upward and finally pass, as he saw her eyes, those wonderful violet eyes, darken and glow, the horror that was in him ebbed slowly away. He could not see her smile, hear her low voice, thrill with the intoxication of her near presence and still keep in his mind the ghastly fear that the alienist had put there.

"Mackenzie's an ass!" he said, savagely, under his breath. "A solemn ass! He doesn't know the difference between the fantastic play of an imaginative girl's mind and madness."

He bent over toward the girl, holding her two hands between his till her breath was warm on his face.

"Shall I tell you something?" he smiled. "To-morrow I am going to do something brave—heroic. I am going to dress very gorgeously in my shiniest hat and my smartest frock coat, with a camelia in the button-hole, and I am going to get into the most imposing *voiture* I can find—no common *fiacre*, *parbleu!*—and drive up to the front of the big gray house that one can see through the trees *là-bas*. I shall demand an audience with madame your mother, and shall say, standing very impressively—like this: 'Madame, I have the honor to ask your daughter's hand in marriage. Of course I am not good enough for her, but then neither is anyone else, so that doesn't matter. Permit me, madame, to introduce myself, Jimmy Mozart Rogers, Duke of Coney Island and Far Rockaway, Baron of the Bronx, Lord of Hoboken and Weehawken Heights, Knight of the Tenderloin, Knight of the Tammany Fleece!' Now that ought to fetch her, ought it not?"

The girl seemed greatly impressed.

"I am sure it will," she agreed.

"Are you certain that you won't forget any of it? I shall be behind a portière, I think. I should like to hear you do it—you have such an air!

But dear me, are you all that? You must be tremendously important."

"Oh, that's nothing," he deprecated, modestly. "There are no end of my countrymen with just as dignified titles, and as ancient ones, too. You—you don't feel afraid of me or anything?"

She shook her head, laughing a little, and then rose with a sigh.

"I must go," she grieved, "and see that aunt! Ah, but come to-morrow, heart's dearest! Don't call upon madame *ma mère* to-morrow; come to me! I—I can't spare you. Do you know how I love you, *mon cœur*? Do you? Ah, but you don't, of course; you're only a man!" She laid her face to his cheek. "Just to think," she breathed, "that you're never going to be anyone's but mine! years and years! Ah, come early to-morrow, *mon cœur*."

And that night again Jimmy Rogers tramped the Avenue de l'Observatoire till the dawn was gray. Absence from her had brought back in some degree his terrors and dreads.

"If she should find out!" he whispered, shivering a little. "She mustn't find out!" he cried, stoutly. "That will be my part, that she sha'n't find out, that there be no shocks, no mental strain. Oh, my Princess! my Princess!"

It was early, not more than half-past two, when he opened the little postern gate in the wall and stepped into the lilac-scented garden.

Sir Gavin Mackenzie was walking up and down under the chestnuts, his head bent a little, his hands clasped behind his back. He looked tired, a bit worn.

"The Prin—mademoiselle?" asked Jimmy Rogers, quickly.

The famous alienist looked up at the young man's eager face, and down to the damp, hard mould under foot,

and up again at the blue sky that shone between the trees' branches.

"We are all on the knees of the gods, man," he said, irrelevantly. He made as if to speak further, but halted and stirred the mould with a slow foot; then, finally:

"You will find mademoi—you will find the Princess up at the house. You'd better go there." Then, as the American started to pass, he checked him an instant with a hand on his sleeve. "She—she found out—lad," he said, gently. "Last night she found out. 'Twas the stupefity of a servant—an'an—we're all on the knees of the gods, lad, all of us."

Jimmy Rogers hurried up the path.

"Found out!" he cried, dumbly. "My God, found out! Heaven send she hasn't taken it badly! Surely I can comfort her—she mustn't break down!"

The pale, frightened face of a servant met him at the porch and retreated. A great door stood open, and he entered the hall that stretched long and dim and high across the house. There reached his ears from some room beyond the sounds of weeping, of broken sobs. An instinct seemed to lead him down the hall and halted him before the somber hangings of a doorway, with a cold, still fear that settled about his heart, stiffened him in every limb, choked his breathing.

"We are all on the knees of the gods, lad," Mackenzie had said. The words were beating meaninglessly somewhere at the back of his head. From beyond the black curtain there came the scent of lilies. The four great tapers flared and wavered as the curtain dropped to place, then streamed steadily upward again, dripping little rivulets of wax down their sleek white sides.

And there, smiling among her lilies, he found his Princess.



"THE KING WAS WITH ME"

"THE King was with me only yesterday,"
 Thus do I speak to the dead heart of me,
 And speaking, in a vision I can see,
 Revivified, each moment of his stay.
 What wondrous splendor lighted up his way!
 With what a sovereign air of mastery
 He claimed me for his own! How willingly
 I gave, the while for pride I murmured "Nay!"

Now he is gone. I have no wish to weep.
 I know that I shall always be alone,
 That grief is mine or if I wake or sleep,
 And yet I cannot cry aloud or moan.
 I lay my hand on my dead heart, and say,
 "The King was with me only yesterday."

ELIZABETH HARMAN.



UNPROFITABLE AND UNPARDONABLE

MISS TRUST—What would you say of a man who does nothing all the evening but make sheep's eyes?

MISS BEHAVE—I simply wouldn't waste my time with such a mutton-head!



FAVORABLE CLIMATIC CONDITIONS

"IN Lapland," he was saying, "the evenings are several months long."
 "Well, under those circumstances, the lap certainly ought to attain to a high degree of development," faltered she, roguishly, and nestled yet closer.



AN INEVITABLE LAPSE

CRAWFORD—So he's domestic in his tastes, eh?
 CRABSHAW—Very. He stays home every night in the week except his wife's evening at home.

FASHION IN THE GARDEN

By Lady Violet Greville

GARDENING has become the fashion. People who scarcely knew a rose from a peony have suddenly discovered the pursuit, while other people, amateurs in horticulture as well as letters, have taken up their pens to instruct their neighbors. Publishers bring out new gardening books in quick succession, and columns of advice flood the daily papers. One would think that England had never known those cool, leafy spaces, redolent of perfume and peace, which surround our stately country homes, and that no humble cottager had ever grown the lily and the sweet-pea in the borders of his sunny cottage garden.

Horticulture has always been a truly British pursuit. The great Lord Bacon sang its praises three hundred years ago. The real garden-lover, however, reckons nothing of fashion; he proceeds leisurely on his steadfast way, always learning. He cannot go into a new garden without picking up some valuable hint, some little bit of precious knowledge. He takes the keenest interest in his plants and thoroughly understands the value of time, the best gardener.

No garden can be made in a minute; no two gardens can be treated alike. Soil, aspect and climate must all be considered. Fashion, on the contrary, wants us all to tread the same path like silly sheep. At one period she encourages a lurid fury of brilliant ribbon borders and carpet bedding, a smugness of turf and gravel, a symmetry and smoothness. At another she capriciously prefers studied disorder, a trained wildness,

a mixture of woodland and garden, queer, stunted trees and Oriental shrubs. We must now have our wall-gardens, our rockeries, our fruiteries, our Japanese gardens, our pools, our artistic wildernesses. All these things are admirable and charming in their way; they are all lawful, but not all expedient. They require study and knowledge, but the amateur rushes in where the gardener fears to tread. He has never read a book of botany or natural science; he has never studied or thought much about the matter, but he sees no reason why his garden should not be as fashionably beautiful as that of his neighbor of fame and repute. He forgets, even if he has ever known, what Dean Hole says of the successful rose-grower: "You must have a soil that seems to produce the rose spontaneously. You must grow roses by the thousand. You must know the names, habits and position of every rose you possess." All this means time, but time the amateur cannot give. He reckons little of the loves of the plants, their tastes and habits, or of the delightful studies in flower and insect life that should inform his labor.

People regard their gardens very differently. Some look on them as places for croquet, tennis and tea parties; some consider them from the purely utilitarian point of view—so many vegetables, so much fruit, so many flowers for the table, and thus a few pounds saved from the green-grocer's bill; some as a simple expense, a fad of the females of the family. Others like to read and snooze in them, while the rare few

simply love their gardens with a holy love, the true "*furor hortensis*," and are never so happy as when hot and dirty from manual labor in the flower-bed.

When embarking on a garden one should sit down and count the cost, after deciding what plan of garden one intends to follow. Is it to be for show, for profit, or for pleasure?—all incompatible things. Can one plant a shrubbery, indulge in an orchard, lay out a rosary and transform a damp meadow into a prosperous nursery? Shall one go in for hothouse, hardy or half-hardy plants, and above all, how can one avoid shams? We cannot all uproot forest trees and replant them to make a park, as did one Baron Rothschild; we cannot all grow orchids or possess terraces, and for *entailles* old yew hedges and mouldering red brick walls that we may clothe with flowering creepers; but we can all have a little bit of green turf and a

few shrubs and bits of sweet-smelling flowers. "Scents are the souls of flowers," said Joubert, and by the choice of our flowers we display our own characters.

A garden to be beautiful should be natural and suited to its environment. It should be well proportioned, well kept, carefully watched, and above all, *loved*. That is why cottage gardens are so often lovely and the small pleasures of the poor give more joy to the eye and the senses than the gardens of the great. When we set ourselves to the improvement of something we can call our own, when willing hands prune and sow, willing brains reflect and design, and willing minds exert themselves to produce that order which is beauty, then indeed the pursuit of gardening refines our taste, sharpens our intelligence and affords the purest enjoyment and the most lasting delight of any occupation on earth.



UNNECESSARY GENEROSITY

ANNE OLDEN—Just fancy Charlie Sweet's discernment; he said that at the very first sight of me he gave me only twenty-five years.

FLOSSIE YOUNG—I hope you didn't accept them, dear; you don't need them.



FEMININE REVENGE

MRS. GRAMERCY—After the quarrel you had, why did you invite her to the ball?

MRS. PARK—Because it will just break her heart when she feels in duty bound to refuse the invitation.



JUST A BEGINNER

SHE—Has she many friends in society?

HE—Oh, yes; she hasn't been in long, you know.

WOMAN PROPOSES

By May C. Hueston

"YOU certainly are an unusual mortal, Dick. You don't seem to have a bit of curiosity. Why don't you ask why I sent for you to-night?"

"What's the use of asking, Marion? I know you will tell me when you get ready," answered Dick Prescott, as he puffed his cigarette with a contentedly indifferent air.

They were in the Turkish room of the Randolphs' handsome home, and as Marion's uncle was also Richard Prescott's guardian, the young man was a privileged character. In fact, Dick seldom went anywhere unless he was sure of feeling thoroughly at home, for above all other things he enjoyed being comfortable, and he had no fondness at all for what he termed the "society act." He was, as Marion had said, an unusual man, but withal a very popular one.

It was hard to tell just what won him his popularity, for he had few of the qualities that are usually attributed to a "popular" man. He was of few words—too lazy to talk, some said; but he was a keen if silent observer, and so inscrutable that at college they nicknamed him "The Graven Image." Still there was in him a streak of daredeviltry, and he had been at the head of many a reckless adventure.

He was somewhat startled now when Marion, finding that she had to take the initiative, asked, "Dick, would you have any serious objection to marrying me for a while?"

Marion felt triumphant over the jump he gave. His imperturbability often annoyed her excessively. Inwardly she was quaking, but there was nothing to betray her agitation.

"That is a strange request, isn't it, Dick?"

"Decidedly so," he replied, settling down again. "I don't think I quite see the point."

"And I cannot make it clear to you. If you take me at all," she continued, with some of her usual sprightliness, "you will have to take me largely on faith, for I can tell you nothing definite until—well, until I'm married."

"But, my dear girl, you can't be in earnest! Aren't you engaged to Frank Babcock?"

"My dear boy," gravely, "I never was more in earnest in my life, and I am not engaged to anyone. Certain things that have come to my knowledge recently have made it quite impossible for me to marry Frank Babcock. Now please don't look sympathetic. I am not at all heart-broken, and I can hardly flatter myself that he is, either. You need have no scruples on the score of my fiancé."

Her tone was so scornful that Dick was puzzled. He had always supposed that this engagement was entirely to Marion's liking, although he had wondered at her choice, for it seemed to him that Babcock was about the most commonplace of her admirers.

He wondered now if there could have been a lover's quarrel; if what Marion had said could be due to pique; but he soon decided she was too sensible a girl to be carried quite so far by so paltry a motive. So, not knowing what else to do, he waited quietly for her to continue.

"There is a certain thing that I want to do, Dick, a thing that I *must* do, and

I can accomplish it only as a married woman—hence my odd request. All I want of you is to give me your name for a short time, say six weeks at the longest. Then I will tell you all about it, and we will have the marriage annulled. You have told me of the utter hopelessness of your only deep attachment, so I do not feel that I would be hurting anyone by limiting for a short time your attentions to others; and besides, you are the only man I could speak to this way, for you have been to me what my own brother might have been had he lived, and the few other men whom I could trust in a matter like this have—er—well, they—you know—”

“Yes,” said Dick, “they are in love with you. It would be rather too hard to ask a man who loved you to marry you and then give you up; but of course, little girl,” with a whimsical smile, “I am different, so let’s to business. Can’t you give me any idea what this scheme is? It’s entirely for your own sake that I am asking, you know, for I might be able to think of some other way out of it.”

“Do you think, if there had been another way,” she replied, in a low, strained voice, “that I should have chosen *this* one? I do not particularly enjoy throwing myself at any man’s head—even as a matter of form, for a little while. No, I have foreseen all the difficulties, and if you will help me I will take the chances. I am going up-stairs now, and you can think over my proposition. In half an hour I shall come back for your answer.”

Dick stood for some minutes gazing into the fire, then sank into a chair, covering his face with his hands, and tried to think connectively. What was he to do? What ought he to do? What could Marion’s object be? She must have a very strong incentive for taking such a step, for he knew how distasteful it must be to her. This girl he had grown up with had asked him to marry her!

He had not seen so much of her in

recent years, for she was abroad with her uncle during Dick’s last two years at college, and when they returned they had brought with them an addition to their party for which he was quite unprepared. Mr. Randolph had married, and with them came the new Mrs. Randolph and her son, Frank Babcock.

Dick did not return to his guardian’s house after his graduation, as one of the provisions of his father’s will had been that he must make his own way till he was twenty-five, at which time he was to be made acquainted with the full contents of the will. He had worked very hard indeed, and given most of his time to his business. It was during the past Winter that Marion became engaged to Frank Babcock.

Still, he knew that she had not changed radically, and that it must have been hard for her to do what she had done this evening. Well, if she wanted him, she should have him; it mattered little to him what he did. He had worked and striven and kept silent, and the girl he loved had slipped away from him. He thought at first that she knew, but while he was working for her, and while his lips were sealed, another man had won her.

The blow was a cruel one and might have proved the undoing of a weaker man. Dick did not allow his suffering to make him morbid, but it left its mark on his face and in his manner. He often wondered what use he should make of his life, for the loss of his love and hope seemed to leave a void that could never be filled. And now Marion Randolph had asked him to marry her for a while! Well . . .

He heard Marion’s light step on the stairs, the faint rustle of her skirt against the carpet. He was standing at the mantel lighting a cigarette as she came in.

“Are you still quite sure that I am a necessary evil, Marion?” he asked, abruptly.

“Yes, quite sure,” she answered. There was a short silence, and then

Dick spoke again, in a more natural manner.

"As it has to be someone, little girl, of course I am very glad that you came to me. If I am the man of your choice, you may as well tell me how, when and where the deed is to be done."

"Oh, Dick, you're a dear! You've always been so good to me," she said, her voice trembling a little. Now that she had gained her point the strain was beginning to tell. "It is to be just as soon as possible—to-morrow, if you can get away from business."

"Yes, I can get away to-morrow, and will make all the necessary arrangements in the morning. Suppose I come and take you out to lunch, and afterward——"

"Don't say it," she said, nervously, catching his arm. "Walls sometimes have ears, and my plan must not fail. I may seem very selfish, Dick, but you will see afterward that it is all right."

When Dick appeared in the morning it was a very cheerful and self-possessed young woman who greeted him. She breathed a sigh of relief as she settled back in the automobile.

"Is it all right?" she asked.

"Yes," answered Dick, "I think I have fixed everything. We shall stop on our way downtown at the house of the Rev. Doctor Walters, who is a personal friend of mine, and on whose discretion I am sure we can rely."

"That will do very nicely," she replied, indifferently, as if they were discussing something that did not affect her very materially.

"You are sure you are acting for your own good, Marion?" Dick again questioned anxiously as they went up the steps of the minister's house.

"I am sure I am doing what is best for both of us," she replied, quietly. Her answer rather puzzled him. He wondered in what way it would be best for him, but the appearance of the minister quickly drove thoughts of everything but the ceremony from his mind.

In a few moments the service was ended, the words that make or mar so many lives had been spoken, and they stood gazing at each other in an embarrassed fashion—man and wife. Then Dick grasped her hands, saying, somewhat huskily: "I hope you will be happy, little girl."

"I'll try to be a model wife, Dick," she smilingly answered, for Dr. Walters was watching them and looking somewhat astonished at their off-hand manner. He spoke a few kindly words to them, and after thanking him and again enjoining him to silence they left. As the door closed behind them Marion drew a sigh of relief.

"It was not so very dreadful, was it?" she said.

"Why, no," he replied, absently.

"Were you nervous?"

"I was quaking," she admitted, "especially at the 'Can anyone show just cause' part."

"You looked very self-possessed and unconcerned—a little too much so, in fact, for an eloping bride."

"Well, I'm glad my looks belied me. I had dreadful visions of uncle or someone stalking in majestically and spoiling it all. Think how absurd it would have been, Dick! Enter irate uncle: 'Richard, Richard! that *you* should have dealt thus with me; that *you* of all men should have persuaded this foolish girl to take this step; that *you* should have practiced this deception!' Richard silent and crestfallen, overwhelmed by this reproach. Marion to the rescue: 'If you please, sir, Richard is innocent! He never thought of marrying me until last night, and then I asked him to!' Tableau!"

Dick laughed at her droll mimicry.

"That would have been awkward, Marion, I confess. I am rather glad we escaped such an ordeal."

"Where shall we go for luncheon?" Her high spirits were contagious, and his gravity vanished as they were whirled through the sunshine.

"How would you like a day in the country, Marion? It seems a shame to spend this lovely day in the city."

"Why, you must be a wizard, Dick! I was just longing to be away from it all for a bit. How did you guess? But where can we go?"

He made several suggestions, and they finally decided on a little Staten Island golf club, of which he was a member.

Neither of them ever forgot that day. They were like two happy school children, and allowed no thoughts of past or future to interfere with their enjoyment.

"I'm sorry to come back; aren't you?" she said, as they neared New York again. "I felt like a different being down there. The country always goes to my head a little, I think."

"It was great!" he answered, succinctly. "We had quite an ideal honeymoon, didn't we, little girl?"

"Yes, indeed," with a bewitching blush. She had really forgotten that they were married. "Perhaps its brevity added to its charm—we did not stay long enough to become bored. Not even you seemed bored, Dick, and that is unusual: you have been so somber lately. A little unconventionality agrees with you wonderfully."

"Possibly the company had something to do with it," he suggested. "You know I have not been with you much for a good many months, Marion, and we used to be such chums."

"You've been working too hard, I am afraid, and of course I have been busy. I shall have to take my 'big brother' in hand again and pull him out of the rut he seems to have fallen into."

"A good way to begin would be to repeat this little excursion. I know of a number of delightful places near the city, so we could go to a new one each week—have a sort of 'weekly anniversary.'"

"That would be fine, Dick, but what would people say? It would not be proper for me to go about too much with my husband, you know," said Marion, laughing.

"Oh, bother the people!" returned Dick. "No, we can't do that," he

added, quickly, "but we don't need to publish bulletins concerning our movements. They would not think much about it, anyway, knowing how intimate we have been and how much you used to go out with me."

One evening, two weeks later, Marion was seated at the piano, her hands wandering idly over the keys. That day she and Dick had been out in the country again. This time they went on horseback, but the exhilaration of the ride had worn off, and Marion felt rather subdued.

The first week they had repeated their Staten Island trip, taking golf clubs along and playing round the course. Then Dick suggested the horseback ride. Marion protested, somewhat weakly, against repeating their excursions so regularly, but Dick argued that she would soon be leaving town for good, so she yielded. She had lately fallen into the habit of yielding to Dick.

As she played sad little snatches in a dreamy, listless way she was thinking how good Dick had been to her and how much tact he had displayed. The day they were married he had made everything so smooth and easy for her that she had not been in the least uncomfortable in what might have proved a very trying situation. And since then—he knew that she was not particularly happy, that his presence was a relief to her.

"If I ever do get married," she thought, "I hope the *bona-fide* husband will be as good to me as this temporary one has been."

Her thoughts leaped forward to the time of their separation; it would come very soon now, for she had gained her point. She would tell him to-night that he could arrange for the annulment. Somehow, she could not think of this as dispassionately as she once had. She would miss Dick so much. She wondered what would happen afterward, if he would drift away from her again as completely as he had after her engagement. He had said something of going abroad; the thought was not a pleasing one. Neither could she recall with entire

complacency a certain talk she had once had with Dick.

One day, soon after her engagement was announced, she had rallied him about his utter indifference toward a very charming girl who was visiting her, and had asked, "Dick, is no one ever going to find the way to your stony heart?"

He had hesitated a moment, then: "Suppose my heart is not as stony as it is cracked up to be!" he exclaimed. "Suppose I have had my romance, and it is over and done with! Oh, Marion, Marion, if you only knew!"

"Can't you tell me?" she asked, gently, when she recovered from her surprise. "It might help you."

"Yes, I'll tell you. It is not likely to interest you much; there's not much interest in it—no dramatic situations. It is simply this: The girl I love has slipped away from me; there is an insurmountable barrier between us. While my lips were sealed, while I strove and waited, and worked for her, she learned to love someone else. Now that I can speak, she is beyond my reach, that's all."

"Poor boy!" said Marion. "Poor old Dick! Doesn't she know?"

"I don't believe she does. Of course, I could not tell her, but I had a sort of an idea that she guessed—they say a woman always knows when a man loves her, and I did think—" his voice grew unsteady—"I did think she cared something for me. I was a blind idiot, of course, but I loved her so that I thought she must love me. I thought of her so much; of very little else, in fact; but after I left college I did not see her often—I was too busy working for her, and I could not trust myself to be with her too much for fear of telling her how much I loved her. I had to make my own way and I have met with unusual success these last two years. But I've lost her, and it's all worthless to me. So it is hardly worth while to try to interest me in your friends, little girl. I may marry some day, but I shall never love anyone else."

This all came back to Marion as she sat there. She had wondered so

often who this love of Dick's might be; some out-of-town girl, she was inclined to believe.

"I hate to think of that great love of his being wasted," she said to herself; "it would be so well worth having. I wonder if it is as hopeless as he thinks. Perhaps I could help him if he would tell me about it; he would now, I am sure, we have been such good friends lately—" and the music drifted into the minor key. "Did ever a woman before calmly plan to hand her husband over to some other woman? But of course we are different. He does not really belong to me, and he doesn't care, and of course I don't, and—" The music ended with a discord, and she jumped to her feet with a queer, startled look on her face just as Dick entered the room.

"What is the matter, dear?" he asked. "You look frightened."

"Nothing," rather unsteadily, "nothing." That "dear," coming so naturally from his lips, brought a queer little lump to her throat. "What have you been doing?" she asked, hastily. She knew, but she wanted to be silent just then.

"I have been hearing my father's will, Marion. This is my twenty-fifth birthday, you know. It is a most unusual document. You have heard about the first part; the last is queerer still. If you and I marry, the fortune is to be divided equally between us; and if we do not, the bulk of the property goes to you, because you are a girl, and I, being a man, am capable of making my own way."

"Yes, I know all about it. That's why I married you," she said.

"What!" he exclaimed, amazed at this cold-blooded statement. "You married me on account of this money?"

"Yes, so that you would have to take your share," she answered, drily, seeing that he had misunderstood her.

"What do you mean, Marion? I don't understand. Surely you did not do this for me!" The words she had spoken as they had entered the

minister's house recurred to him: "I am sure I am doing what is best for both of us."

"I said I would tell you when I had gained my point, Dick, and the time has come. I could not have married Frank, anyway; I had discovered that we were not going to be happy together, that I did not love him; but the climax was reached when I overheard him telling his mother something very like what I had been thinking. He added that in spite of the 'Prescott fortune,' he almost hoped something would prevent our marriage. After that I questioned Uncle Robert, and learned about the will and how the 'Prescott fortune' concerned me. Frank has been in Uncle Robert's office for several years, and had probably heard of the will there; so, on finding that I would be an heiress, he decided to marry me. All this upset me very much, of course, but what worried me most was the knowledge that, as matters stood, the money that was yours by rights would come to me. I would gladly have divided with you, but I knew you too well to suppose you would take even a penny of it unless legally entitled to it. So I finally hit on the idea of marrying you to make you take what I felt ought to be yours."

"You dear, unselfish girl, to do this for me! Oh, how could you, Marion? What am I to say to you?" helplessly. "Why, I don't need the money; you shall have it, anyway; I'll never take a cent of it."

"I think you will, Dick; to please me, if for no other reason. You surely will not be stubborn about it now. And Dick——"

"Well?" he said, very gently and a trifle unsteadily. She seemed to think so little of what seemed to him such a noble sacrifice, she had acted as few girls would have had the courage to do, and yet—he could say no more just then.

"Dick," she went on, flushing a little. "That girl you told me about—is she lost to you forever?—is she married?"

He looked up quickly, with a queer, sad smile.

"Yes," he answered, gravely; "she is married."

She caught her breath. "Ah, then it is hopeless. I'm so sorry, Dick. Forgive me for speaking of it, but I did so want you to be happy. I thought I might have helped you." She began moving restlessly about the room, and as she moved, the violets he had sent her that morning fell from her belt to the floor.

"May I keep these, Marion?" he asked, as he picked them up.

"No, no, I want them," she said, impulsively, and then stopped suddenly, her face crimson. She had all the others he had sent her in those two weeks, and she would not part with these.

"I will give you some of them," she faltered, making an effort to regain her composure. That hot blush, and something in her eyes, made Dick's heart leap. He caught her outstretched hand and drew her toward him.

"Do you really care about them, sweetheart?" he asked, eagerly. "Couldn't we manage to keep them together? I love you so, dear; won't you stay with me always? Won't you learn to care for me a little?"

"What do you mean, Dick?" indignantly. "The other girl—surely you haven't——"

He laughed. "There never was any 'other' girl—it was always you, dear. You are the girl I have loved, the one I have worked and waited for—and lost. You are the only girl there ever has been for me, dearest."

"Why, you just said she was married," returned Marion, reproachfully, and only half-convinced.

"You dear little goose, *isn't* she married? *Isn't* she married to me? The question is, is she willing to stay married? Does she love her husband?"

"It would be too bad to separate the violets," she said, softly, "and," as he drew her into his arms, "I love you, dear."

THE ANGUISH OF ROYALTY

By A. Walter Utting

MUSIC and laughter resounded outside as the door opened and the Queen stepped in. She was pretty and young, not more than twenty-two, but she was tired. The chamber was strangely out of character with the presence of Royalty. There was disorder everywhere. In one corner was a pile of shavings; in another some careless person had thrown a garment.

As there was not a chair in the place the Queen perched herself on a table. But first she took particular pains to shut the door. Evidently she did not wish people to intrude on her reveries. Then she sighed dolefully.

"Oh, the monotony of it; the monotony of it!" she cried.

Her eyes were heavy with tears, and she seemed very sad. She tried to close her ears to the sounds of the music that floated to her from without. But a moment before, when she had been surrounded by her subjects, she had appeared gay and light-hearted. She had smiled adorably. She had even sung a song, a song of Royalty, and one which, in the singing, did not belittle her dignity.

She pressed her hands against her forehead. The pulses in her temple were hammering fiercely. Her heartbeats were loud and quick. She closed her eyes and rocked herself to and fro.

"A terrible life," she sobbed; "an awful life! No rest, never any rest. And there seems to be no end in sight. A queen!—and heaped with the cares of Royalty. Ladies-in-waiting, courtiers, servants, knights, soldiers—everyone to attend my beck and call. But no king! no king!"

The music continued on the outside. The Queen heard it, but the sound was only distressing. It reminded her that she was a ruler, that she had license for nothing, no license for freedom, for rest, for quiet, for happiness, for pleasure. And people were eager to look on her and envy her the position she had acquired!

She had not always been a queen. There had been a time when she had no dream of ever being worshiped as a goddess. She had gone to school then; yes, to a common public school, and studied her lessons with the avidity or dulness, as the fancy took her, of other children. If anyone had told her of the monarchy over which she was destined to reign she would have laughed. Her laugh was good-natured, silvery, contagious. She had observed, since she had ascended the throne, that everyone was willing to laugh with her, never suspecting that she felt more like weeping.

The Queen opened her eyes and stared piercingly into every nook and cranny of the room in which she had taken shelter. Her mouth twitched. Dirt and disorder; dirt and disorder. Someone had started to paint the wall but had left the task unfinished. A coil of steam-pipe rested near one dismal corner. The painter had daubed this pipe with green, purple, blue, red, white, gilt—not with a symmetry pleasing to the eye, but with a careless disregard for nicety. The brush had been smeared over the pipe once or twice, and that was all.

A gown of vivid red hung on a nail that seemed to be giving up its hold on the wall. Another, black and trimmed with bangles, hung

near. The Queen sniffed contemptuously.

"Such play at style, at grace, at life, at pleasure!" she said. "And how near does it come to them? I wish I were free; that there were no need of a ruler, that my subjects would rebel and dethrone me; that I could return to the old school days, and be as other girls. Old school days! Where are my old friends? Where is Jack, with whom I used to play? I thought I saw Jack in the crowds Monday. I saw an eager face lifted to catch a glimpse of me as I appeared before the vulgar public, accompanied by my attendants. But it disappeared. Then I saw the same face yesterday, and I looked into the eyes. It was Jack, dear, good old Jack, worth a million courtiers and knights. But it may have been that I was dreaming. Queens dream betimes, and are happy in their dreams. But he said he would look for me. When I left home long ago he asked me where I was going. I could not say; I had been summoned; I did not know it was for a throne. And then he managed to get letters to me. He told me how things were getting along at home; how the folks were wondering at my absence."

She descended from the table and paced the floor nervously. She was tall and light. Her hair was like sun-burned wheat, and her eyes like the blue of the heavens. Her garb was rich, as befitted a queen, and as she walked the train dragged on the soiled floor. But she was oblivious now to consequences. She was thinking of Jack.

The music had ceased, but she could hear footsteps pacing to and fro before her door. Had they placed a sentry to see that no harm came to her? If Jack could be her sentry! Oh, how she longed for love! Her downcast eyes caught sight of a piece of paper. Stooping, she picked it up. It was a part of one of her own treasures; a part of one of Jack's letters which she had dropped as she walked. It was full of kind words; and kind words, even for her, were few. She read

the signature, "Jack," and smiled. She was very pretty when she smiled.

She had asked herself at one time whether it was incongruous for a queen to call mortal man by his Christian name, or rather nickname. But a queen's heart is a woman's heart, and what it dictates, that will she do when she has the opportunity. So he was Jack, and would remain so until death carried her away—and then, in her lasting dream he would still be Jack.

"Dearest," she read from the scrap of letter, "I wish that we could meet again. Life is a vacancy without you. Don't you realize what it meant to me when you went away?—where, we could not say. Where are you now? I wonder if you remember the good old days—they seem ages and centuries ago—when we were school-mates. We were so happy—and then you went away. And I have been so lonesome; so lonesome. Affairs of the world have prospered with me; has it been the same with you? But I am not happy; I want to see you, to speak to you, to tell you—to tell you—that I—that I—I am so unhappy."

The Queen was sobbing. She had knelt on the dirty floor and rested her head on the table. She was sobbing piteously.

"And all for show, pride, vanity!" she cried. "Oh, to be home again; to live as other people live; to see Jack; to hear him speak! He says he is unhappy; is he more so than I? He is lonesome; more so than I?"

There was a light rap on the door of the chamber. But the Queen was beyond hearing it. The rap was repeated after a respectful pause. No answer, save the hysterical sobbing and moaning of the Queen.

The door opened, and then shut. A man had entered. He was about six feet in height, with an athlete's form. He was dark and handsome. He was dressed neatly and was very clean. An anxious look was on his face. As he glanced round the squalid apartment he caught sight of the kneeling woman. He hastened to

her side. He touched her shoulder. With a start she grasped the tattered remnants of the letter in front of her and rose to her feet, drawing herself erect and assuming her queenly dignity. She did not look at his face; she thought she knew who he was. He was the man who told her what to do next; who gave her orders, though she was a queen.

"Well?" she asked, superciliously.

The man twitched his hat; he had formed no opinion as to how the Queen would look on him when he visited her there. And he was a bit hurt by the tone of her voice when she addressed him.

"I have come to speak to you, Ruth," he said, almost meekly.

The Queen lifted her gaze. She looked at his face. Then she smiled radiantly.

"Jack," she said; "dear Jack!" She could say no more at the moment, her heart was so full of sudden joy.

"I've come to speak to you, Ruth," he repeated. It was strange that she, a queen, should allow him to call her by the name bestowed at the font. But she loved his voice, and the name. No one now called her "Ruth;" no one had done so since she had become Queen.

The man noticed that the Queen was overcome and could say nothing, so he continued:

"I have hunted high and low for you. I never dreamed of finding you here, and in your present position. I saw you on Monday, and spent Tuesday wondering whether or not my eyes had deceived me. Then yesterday I saw you again. Ruth, you are not sorry I came to see you, are you? You won't tell me that I must go—that you don't care to see me—that I intrude? Your present position has not lowered my station in life, has it?"

"No, no," she whispered, and began to sob, an echo to the deluge of tears she had been shedding when he had surprised her.

Jack lifted her to the table. "You don't have chairs in your palace, I see," and he laughed. But the laugh was not a merry one. He was sorry

for the Queen. "And there is more dirt than diamonds; and no pleasure or comfort that I can see."

He sat beside her. She laid her head on his shoulder and spoke between sobs.

"You don't know of the life," she told him. "You can't imagine what it is. You, in the outer world, hear strange rumors. Some say that we are the happiest of living creatures; others, that we have no joys nor pleasures."

"And the truth is——?"

The Queen made a sweeping gesture. She pointed to the iridescent gown; to the bangled garment; to the dirt, the squalor, the painted steam-pipes. But she made no oral answer.

"Must you stay here?" Jack asked her. "Is it necessary that you remain in these quarters?"

"I am Queen," she replied; and as she spoke sounds of music penetrated the room. "There! I must go for a few minutes. Stay here, and I will return. The people want to see me. The music is the warning."

She dried her eyes and smiled—a practice smile, she said. She must smile on the people. Jack's heart was torn; the smile had been but a pale reflection of her old-time laugh.

The man walked the floor after she had gone. He wondered if she would leave all this and go with him. Surely someone could be found who would take her place! A piece of paper lay in his path. He picked it up. It was the same that the Queen had been reading—a portion of his love letter. He read it again and again. "So unhappy!" Ay, who was there to say how unhappy he was! And her environments had made him yet unhappier. He made a resolve within his heart, a resolve that she should quit these people with whom she was wont to associate; the ladies-in-waiting, the courtiers, the knights, the soldiers and the glamour of the court—for to the public there was a great deal of glamour attached to these people and scenes.

Soon the Queen returned to him.

The perspiration had formed in beads on her brow. She was trembling excitedly.

Jack approached her and placed his arm round her waist. She did not resist him. She was pleased that there was someone near her whom she knew and whom she could trust. Could she trust Jack? She smiled inwardly. She had trusted him with her heart. What more or greater trust was needed?

"I'm going to take you away," said the man. "I'm not going to let you stay here any longer. Oh, my love, you must come with me. Give up the life, won't you, Ruth? For my sake! —to make us both happy!"

The sounds of music were dying away. There was a great amount of hand-clapping, stamping of feet and huzzas. Ruth was motionless in the prison of his arms. Suddenly he released his hold. Someone was coming down the alleyway to the door. It opened, and a man with a frowzled beard showed his head. He withdrew it quickly as he noticed that the Queen was not alone.

"Show's over; curtain's down; all out for the night," he said, and moved on.

"Who was that?" asked Jack.

"The stage-manager," Ruth told him. "Excuse me while I change these stage things for my street clothes, then I'll walk with you."

She started for the door, then looked back. Jack came to her.

"Ruth!" he said, tenderly.

She flung herself into his arms, and said, brokenly: "Take me home, Jack; take me home. Let us return to the love of the school days; to the innocent pleasures of life. I'm sick of paint and powder, scenery and make-believe. Won't you take me home?"

"To the hotel?" he asked, dubiously.

"No, home; to your home; to our home!"

The theatre-going public never heard what became of Ruth. She disappeared in a night, and in her place rose up another queen, but wearing the same garments, crown and paste jewels, and swaying the same sceptre. The stage-manager said that Ruth's contract had been suddenly annulled by one of her relations. He didn't think it necessary to explain everything. Then, too, he did not know everything.



IN THIS TIME AND CLIME

"IT takes three generations to make a gentleman."

"Or a million dollars!"

"Or a million dollars. I suppose time is money in about that proportion."



AN EXPERT ESTIMATE

SHE—Is she very pretty?

HE—Well, she hasn't any money to lose.



DECIDEDLY DIFFERENT

PENFIELD—Was his book humorous?

MERRITT—I wouldn't like to say that exactly. However, the publication of it was a joke.

SONNETS TO A LOVER

By Myrtle Reed

I—CONFESSION

DEAR, wouldst thou have me say how much I care,
And send the scarlet flood into my cheek?
Shall I forget my womanhood and speak?
Before thee must my inmost self lie bare?
I have no thought I would not have thee share,
And yet my faltering words must prove too weak
To fitly give the knowledge thou dost seek
Of love that is not passion, but a prayer.

Ah, chide me not, Heart's Dearest One, but feel
The trust that is of perfect love a part,
That only those who truly love may know;
Forgive me if my lips may not reveal
The sacred secrets hidden in my heart—
I cannot speak because I love thee so!

II—LOVE'S BLINDNESS

No fault in me? And wouldst thou have me take
My lover's tender words and deem them true?
What if my sight should find perfection, too,
And thus another grievous error make?
I would the dream were real for thy dear sake,
Since with a greater gladness thou couldst woo
Were I a goddess, not a woman who
Must fear and tremble lest thou shouldst awake.

No fault in me? Dear Heart, it is thy love
That with transfiguring mist has veiled thine eyes
To make thy vision of me always kind;
And so I pray to Him enthroned above
That to thy height of beauty I may rise,
Or else God keep thee still divinely blind.

III—DEATH AND LOVE

The one is wracked with grief and bent with age,
And on his world-scarred face there comes no gleam
Nor human touch that haply may redeem
The common ending of our pilgrimage;
The other's childish laughter flouts the sage,
Bids him forget his wisdom, makes him dream,
And as by magic, with his touch supreme
He turns to gold the humblest heritage.

THE SMART SET

These two are friends, for on the selfsame road
 They fare together, with hand clasping hand,
 Where asphodel and roses break the sod;
 'Tis Love who shares with Death his heavy load,
 'Tis Death who close by careless Love doth stand,
 And, side by side, they point the way to God.

IV—THE STORM

Wild winds that grow to fury scourge and lash
 The threatening sea that echoes back their cries;
 Before the storm a single seagull flies,
 While whitening breaker legions meet and crash.
 The wind and tide in deadly battle clash,
 Where tattered surges in swift anger rise
 To thunder back the challenge that defies
 The darkened sky, torn by the lightning's flash.

I fear no storm, within thy sheltering arm,
 Nor yet the thronging thunders, nor the dark,
 Nor booming breakers through the blackness hurled;
 Thou art my Captain, shielding me from harm,
 And through the tempests thou wilt guide my bark
 Past all the rocks and dangers of the world.

V—THE NORTH STAR

In realms of night, ere dawn and day began,
 Amid the vaulted dark this star was set;
 And shining with unchanging splendor yet
 It guides the faltering steps of way-worn man.
 Adrift at sea the troubled pilots scan
 The stormy heavens and frowning clouds that let
 No single gleam of white or violet
 Upon the zenith's dark and threatening span.

And even as the storm-tossed sailor lifts
 Bewildered eyes to midnight's hollow sphere
 And guides his course by steady lights above,
 So through the darkness, broken into rifts,
 I never yet have failed to find thee, Dear,
 Nor have I lost the compass of thy love.



DIFFERENT NOW

MADGE—The smell of gasoline used to make her deathly sick when her mother asked her to help clean clothes.

MARJORIE—She doesn't seem to mind it now when her young man takes her out in his auto.

“BREAD AND BUTTER”

By Baroness von Hutten

“AND you are painting her, *mon cher?*”
Raimond de Merricourt put up his glass and looked again at the box in which she sat.

Falconer laughed. “Yes. In luck, am I not? Even dear old Bouguereau is refused now. Mam’selle Lili is *trop grande dame* to pose now that she is rich. But I—old friends, you know.”

“She is glorious. The diamonds become her.”

“That tiara is yours, isn’t it?”

Merricourt shrugged his well-padded shoulders. “I gave it to her, but God knows who will pay for it!”

Suddenly he lowered his glass. “*Tiens!* who is that up there to the right? *Ma foi!* what a beauty!”

Falconer stared a moment and then rose. “By Jove!” he said, “I know them—haven’t seen ’em for years. I must go and speak to them. Good-bye.”

“You forsake me, then? All right. *Au ’voir!*”

Five minutes later Falconer sat in the Blairs’ box, talking to his friend of years past, plain, clever Kate Blair. He talked to Kate, but he looked at Maud. “Eight years,” said Miss Blair, musingly. “You are two years younger than I. That makes you twenty-six. You look older.”

He laughed. “Overwork, Kate. How old was little Maud in those days?”

“Which means, how old is *big* Maud in these days. She is nineteen. What do you think of her, Tom?”

“She is superb.” He leaned across sleepy Mrs. Blair and spoke to the young girl. “How do you like the play?”

She turned her beautiful head and looked serenely into his eyes. “I like it, but I don’t understand much. They speak so fast.”

He smiled. “It is very clever,” he answered, “and very French.”

“Do you know who that girl is in the box there—there, in white?”

“Oh, that is a famous Parisienne. Her name is Lili—Lili Bonnet,” he added, with a little grimace.

“I never saw anyone so lovely in my life. I wish I could meet her. Do you know her?”

“Yes. But—she is not a lady. She was a model until d’Ayerres, the *Aurora* man, died and left her some money.”

Maud watched him seriously. “I shouldn’t mind her having been a model. I am not a snob.”

Falconer bit his lip. “Have you read ‘Trilby?’”

She blushed furiously and turned away.

The pounding began behind the scenes, and he rose. “I must be off. I will see you again.”

When he reached his place in the orchestra Merricourt broke out, with renewed enthusiasm:

“She is ravishing, my little one, *adorable!*”

“Yes,” answered Falconer, “but *bibiche*. What we call ‘bread and butter.’”

The Frenchman laughed. “You virtuous Anglo-Saxons amuse us wicked Gauls. What should a *jeune fille* be but bread and *buttaire*?”

During the next *entr’acte* Falconer went up to Lili. She was in the best of humor, and very amusing.

Behind, well out of view, sat her mother, “*la mère Bonnet*.”

"*Hé*," said Lili, as Falconer sat down by her, "who are your friends, *là-bas*?"

"English people, whom I knew long ago." As he spoke, Maud Blair saw him, and turned her back pointedly.

Lili adjusted the big diamonds in her pretty ears.

"She is a beauty, the big one," she remarked. "As beautiful as I myself, I think, only—one cannot tell with the clothes."

"T—t—t— Miss Blair is a lady."

"I know. But in effect it is only a question of clothes," she returned, placidly.

Falconer liked the girl. There was a certain child-likeness about her, that, added to her great beauty and her precocious shrewdness in other ways, was piquant. And then she liked him. There was nothing more, and the Englishman enjoyed the position, which was an original one for Paris.

At the end of the play he bade her good-night and rushed to the stairs to meet the Blairs. Kate made a funny little grimace as he appeared.

"So you know the fair Lili?"

Maud drew herself up in a distinctly priggish way and turned to her mother.

"Of course I know her. She is sitting to me for my Salon picture."

"Miss Maud is shocked," went on the elder sister. "How foolish!"

"Precisely."

"If Maud is such a saint, why did she come to see 'Boisfleury'?"

Kate held out her hand. "Good-night, Tom. We are at the Binda. Come to see us soon. And don't be *too* savage. She didn't understand a word of it."

Two days later Falconer dined with the Blairs.

Maud wore white and had a rose in her splendid hair. Falconer was much amused and much irritated by the silly displeasure she showed toward him.

After dinner he talked to Kate. "Maud does not know that I am desperately in love with her," he said,

plaintively, fishing a lump of sugar out of his coffee.

Kate laughed. "You in love with Maud? Nonsense, Tom! She is an angel of goodness and beauty, but as yet, alas, she is distinctly bread and butter, and I imagine one doesn't cultivate a taste for that elementary though wholesome article in Paris."

Falconer looked at her keenly. "Bread and butter?" he asked.

Her plain, clever face flushed scarlet. "Oh, how horrid! You think I am jealous of my little sister? No, Tom. I only meant—well, you will see. For instance, she has not forgiven you for going to that model's box. That is bread and butter, isn't it?"

"It was her sweet innocence," he murmured, his eyes fixed on Maud's face, as she sat by a lamp at some distance.

"You called it foolish the other night."

"You are an unsympathetic wretch. And if I am not to be in love with her I insist on being wild to paint her!"

Kate's eyes twinkled. "Maud, Tom wants to paint you," she said.

Maud curled her short upper lip in a way at once exquisite and absurd. "I am not a model," she answered, without moving.

As he walked home Falconer scolded himself.

"I was an ass to ask her," he said. "Absurd little prig!"

When he paid his "digestion visit" a few days later Mrs. Blair and Maud were alone.

Maud had the queer, throaty voice of many Englishwomen, and the conversation was most commonplace.

When Falconer shook hands with her at parting, a little, hot thrill climbed up his spine.

"I am in love with her," he said to himself.

His picture progressed satisfactorily. Bouguereau came in occasionally to look at it. "*Bon!*" he would say, curtly.

Lili was perfect as a model and full of a strange pride in her aid to Falconer. "*Oui, c'est bon,*" she said once to the master. "But without me he could not do it."

Falconer took a box for "Faust," and the Blairs and Merricourt were his guests.

Once, meeting Falconer's eyes, Maud blushed. Falconer's head swam with delight.

Then, as they left the Opéra Lili passed them. Falconer bowed ceremoniously, and Maud, biting her lip, turned away.

Merricourt wrapped her in her opera cloak, standing on tiptoe to compass the service.

"What a pity!" said Kate, wickedly. "You were really beginning to make an impression."

"It is utterly absurd," Falconer retorted, hotly. "Why shouldn't I bow to the woman? I am greatly in her debt. I may be an ass, but I'm not a cad."

He put them into their carriage, and Maud gave him the chill tips of her white suède fingers with a marked air of displeasure.

Falconer laughed angrily as he put on his hat. "Little fool!" he thought.

When next he met them it was April, and they had been in England.

It was in the Luxembourg Gallery. Maud's hat was like a crown of violets.

She greeted him very cordially. They roamed about among the beautiful pictures for over an hour. Maud's artistic taste was bad, very bad, but Falconer did not care.

In his ecstasy he drew her attention to Collins's "Florile," loveliest of undraped women lying on the Spring grass as innocently as a child.

"Is it not exquisite?" he murmured.

She turned on him, her face scarlet. "It is disgusting! How *dare* you show me such a picture!"

Catching her sister by the arm she marched off.

Falconer sank down on a divan and laughed aloud. "Well, of all the idiotic little geese!" he said.

He looked critically at the offending picture.

"No. No one but a prig could object to you, you beauty," he decided. "That ends it."

He rose and went on. "And yet—she *did* blush when she saw me."

One day early in May, as Falconer walked in the Bois, he came on Maud Blair sitting under a tree. He bowed, and was about to go on, when he saw that she was crying. He stopped abruptly. "What is wrong?"

"Nothing. Please go away."

The pretty blond creature with the tear-stained face seemed a baby to him. He sat down by her and took her hand. "What is it, Maud?" he asked, gently.

She dried her eyes. "I—only came here to be alone," she returned at length.

"Poor child!"

She looked up at him gratefully, with red and swollen eyes. "You are very kind, for—I know you think me an awful goose."

"My dear Maud!"

"I am sorry I have been so cross to you," she went on, her voice still catching. "I *know* I'm silly, but I can't help it." Pausing, she blew her nose with childish abandon. "I can't help feeling as I do about things, and—it *does* seem awful, painting people without any—any clothes on!"

"I know, I know. And—you are right in one way. But never mind all that. Can't you tell me why you are unhappy? I'm not very happy myself, so perhaps I can help you."

She smiled sympathetically. "You don't look well, you are so white. What is the matter?"

Falconer's heart beat hard. "A common ill. I care very much for someone who doesn't care for me."

She rose suddenly. "I must go. I understand, though I'm not clever. Indeed I do. It—is awful to care for

people." With a divine blush she held out her hand.

"The carriage is there. Please don't come. Good-bye. And perhaps—she does care for you. You can't tell until you've asked her."

That night Falconer sat for hours before his easel. The beautiful Lili, perched on the edge of a luminous star, smiled at him from the canvas as God made her.

It was a beautiful picture, pure in its truthful dignity. It was his best picture. It was his Future. When gray, shadowy light began to steal through the closed shutters and dawn had come, Falconer took his palette knife and quietly slit his Salon picture into ribbons, which he threw into the fire.

That afternoon Falconer entered the Blairs' salon at the Binda.

Maud sat alone at her writing table.

When he came in she rose and ran to him. Her face glowed.

"Oh!" she cried, "you were so kind to me yesterday, I must tell you! It has all come right! I am going to marry Arthur Brown. I am very happy!"

"I am glad," murmured Falconer, watching the roses in the carpet expand and contract as he spoke.

"And you?" went on the girl.

"I?—oh, I was mistaken, that was all," he went on, roughly.

"She does not—?" Her voice was warm with the ready sympathy of happiness.

"No. I do not."

An hour later Falconer stood in his studio, staring at the shreds of canvas that clung to the framework of what had been his Salon picture.



"I SHOULD LIE LATE"

THEY tell me, love, when children go to rest
Held in the arms they know and love the best
They then sleep sweetest, longest—until late
When conqueror Day rides through Dawn's golden gate.

If, when I die, your lips should mine caress,
And your two arms around me warmly press,
I should lie late on Resurrection morn,
Till Gabriel wound impatient on his horn.

S. W. GILLILAN.



HIS GOOD REASON

CRAWFORD—Old Parvenu seems more proud of his horse than of his family.

CRABSHAW—No wonder. The horse has a pedigree.



CONDITIONS FAVORABLE

MADGE—Did that story end up by the hero and heroine being happy ever afterward?

MARJORIE—I guess so. They didn't marry.

LIKE A THIEF IN THE NIGHT

By John Regnault Ellyson

THE fancy for horses my wife entertained at one time was given up only when she came within an ace of breaking her beautiful neck. I say frankly I could understand this fancy. I have always held that nothing shows our fine nature better than a love for horses, for spirited ones especially. I take to them myself in off seasons. I believe my wife never pursued any of her numerous fancies with more ardor. True mistress of the reins, she assumed the most lively, the most jockey air, and seemed extremely at home behind her gallant nags. She was happy—and I was inexpressibly so, being master of the long hours in which she disported on the road.

But certainly I could not understand why a whim for whips succeeded her fancy for horses. It followed, nevertheless. There was something unnatural in this whim for whips, something uncommonly perverse, something of provoking bravado. My wife, during that season, bought all the whips she saw and hung them at odd points on the walls of her chamber. Half the time, while the fever lasted, there was a buzzing noise about that added nothing to my tranquillity. You see, for several months my wife practiced with these pretty and flexible reeds; she grew wonderfully clever and skilful, too, picking a fly from the window pane, touching the cat's nose across the room, or with a snap dislodging a spider from the cove of the cornice. The lash in her hand curled, fluttered, whispered lovingly, whistled or shrieked, chirped or crashed. The various sounds,

kindling in the air, played the mischief with my nerves. Of course she was all prudence and only took pride in showing the dexterity she had acquired; still, try as I would, I scarcely ever felt altogether safe, and daily apprehended the loss of an eye or the lobe of an ear.

I am rambling, however. I set out simply to relate an unfortunate occurrence of that period.

One night, after passing some convivial hours at Gerot's with my old friends Jonquil and Bramble, I came home late. I find I am usually a little late on such occasions. It was at least a quarter of two, I think, when I parted from Bramble at the door. Filled with the delights of the evening's repast, I experienced a certain genial elasticity and elation; but despite the fact that I had feasted royally I was much myself. My judgment was cool; my faculties were alert. I went in, locked up, extinguished the light and mounted the stairs discreetly and without noise, like a thoughtful and considerate person. There are men who never think of aught but themselves. I am not one of them; I am always thinking of someone else. In fact, I anticipated an explosion as soon as I entered my chamber. I was prepared. I had one of the most satisfactory, one of the most plausible excuses that could be offered—as good as anything I ever conceived.

But the unexpected happened. I found my wife asleep. In the chamber there was a brooding stillness. The heavy curtains were drawn close about the windows; the air was languorous and warm; the light burned

at a glimmer. I was grateful for this turn in affairs, and I resolved to handle myself with extreme care. It was a precaution that was a pleasure. I moved like a shadow. I disrobed rapidly and with more than accustomed skill in matters of detail. I was charmed to meet so well the needs of the hour. I closed the door as softly as a great bird closes its wings. You might have thought I walked on velvet—as indeed I did, on the velvet of the carpet. I put out the gas and then slipped under the coverlets with the subtlety of the old serpent among the leaves of Eden. Lying there at ease, watching the last flickering embers on the hearth and listening to the deep, musical breathing of my wife, I thanked heaven sincerely for the few favors bestowed on me, and soon I fell into a light and agreeable slumber.

At some time in the night, however, I woke suddenly, feeling as if my throat had been filled with feathers. Though anything but pleasing, I assure you, it was a sensation I had experienced before, and it did not alarm me. Thanks to the spiced repast of the evening I suffered an uncommon, guttural dryness—an intolerable thirst. At the moment of waking I did not attempt to clear my throat; I did not foolishly twitch my limbs or spring up or gasp. So far my good sense did not desert me. My wife was still slumbering soundly, and I adopted, consequently, a well-worn but sure method of relief.

Now I had frequently boasted that I could go anywhere in my house at night without the aid of a light. I had proved, indeed, more than once that I knew the location of everything, that I knew every crevice and corner from the garret to the basement. My own room, though very large, and in spite of its ornaments, was of course as familiar to me as the outlines of my own figure. Often before, at any hour between sundown and dawn, I had moved across the chamber and quenched my thirst at the pitcher on the washstand without

so much noise as would have wakened a cat.

I had boasted of this, I say, but after that night I boasted no more. Unfortunately, at the outstart, I aroused my wife's cat, which somehow had got into the room, and this is the way my misadventure began. I crept from the coverlet, braced myself as usual along the side of the bed until I reached the footpost, and there by accident I trod softly on the cat's paw. The cat uttered no sound, but with a perfection of feline malice drew her keen claws across my bare toes. Then I did a very unwise thing. I stooped and clutched at the vicious animal, and in so doing I ran the crown of my eye against the top of the post. At the moment I thought I had leaped out of my skin. Such was my impression, but I had not so much as budged an inch. The blow I received filled the air with sparks, and I could scarcely check a low murmur that rose to my lips.

I advanced two steps sidewise in hopes of avoiding a further encounter. Very fatal steps were these—the two steps by which I entirely lost my bearings—for in the next instant, when I lifted my hands and extended them at various angles. I touched nothing. I asked myself why this was and how it happened, and I could find no answer. Then with an idea of recovering my old position and starting afresh from that point, the post, I had the folly to move again. I turned twice, stepping backward as well as forward. I failed completely in my aim. Perhaps I had moved further than I supposed. I stood still and drew a mental diagram of the room, of its furniture and its empty spaces, but a doubt suggested itself as to whether my wife had recently made changes I had not observed, and this doubt immediately redoubled my perplexity.

It was impossible to remain where I was, and yet I was almost afraid to stir. The little comedy, in which I had often played so neat a part, had begun badly, and here assumed an irritating and confusing phase. The

gay comedian became a performer in a monotonous pantomime. I think there was never an intelligent being in just such a plight—never a being within the compass of the mere nutshell of his own chamber so utterly at sea. In truth here was the situation—objects innumerable around and none that could be reached, silence that might not be broken, darkness that seemed denser than darkness, and someone moving in the darkness, restless and bewildered.

I moved as we move in a blind dream, and with a similar result. After a time I paused in my efforts. I had many conflicting notions at once—ways out of my dilemma, perils and pitfalls. My wits were leaving me; I struggled to repossess them—a struggle out of which nothing could be gained. It was tragic; it was absurd. I grew singularly unnerved. I shed tears. I would have given half the world for the sight of the moon between the closed curtains, for the glimpse of the pale stars, for even a single faint glimmer among the dead embers.

If I spoke I knew the penalty; if I stumbled I was done for. I listened. I could hear the sonorous breathing of my wife, and I thanked God that she still breathed in slumber, but somehow, and I could not say why, her breathing sounded very unusual and extremely remote. I listened for other sounds, for some slight noise elsewhere in the house or outside in the open air—footsteps in the street, the wind in the trees—but there was none. I could hear only the breathing of my wife, and that seemed like the murmur of someone far, far away.

What had occurred? Nothing, so far as I could perceive. Then why this apparent distance between the bed and me, why this real space between the various pieces of furniture, and why could I turn so often and yet brush against no object at all? These questions roused me from my stupor. I made another movement, stepping cautiously forward in a di-

rect line, carefully extending my hands.

Once I touched a chair—a chair that of course I could not place relatively. Soon I touched the wall. This pleased me—a wall leads somewhere. I followed slowly the surface of the wall until my foot, a little in advance of my hand, hit lightly against the edge of an article of furniture. In my effort to catch the form of the article I bent down and lost the guiding line of the wall, and when near the floor I touched what I took to be the cat. I could not resist closing my fingers over the elusive fur, and in a twinkling I got paid by a sharp rap across my parted lips.

I had mistaken the feathers of a duster for the fur of the cat, and under my pressure the wooden handle had made a rather unique rebound. I was very much nettled, and hardly considering what I did, I flung the duster from me vigorously. I heard it as it fell among the toilet cases on the bureau.

I heard it and trembled. I was certain that my wife would start up and bring about new troubles. I braced myself for the struggle and waited. But the last thing I could possibly have expected ensued—a prolonged silence, a profound, dead stillness, all the more distressing because unaccountable. I set my ear for a noise of some kind; even a vague human accent, a mere echo, a simple whisper would have been gracious, but I harkened in vain. Despite the keenness of my hearing I could not so much as catch the breathing of my wife. While I tried to pluck up courage, while I swayed and wobbled around, eagerly seeking for any object as a means of support, I touched a certain surface like marble. It was smooth and chill. Very naturally I thought I had come in contact with the table—I was sure I had, indeed; but the surface under my fingers was in an upright rather than in a horizontal position. I wondered how the top of the table could be slanted toward the floor. I could not understand why it should be so;

we had no furniture of that fashion. This perplexed me immensely; the customary order of things was being shifted or reversed; there was the possibility of untold revolutions; the room seemed turning about me mysteriously, and I feared that in the end I should find myself scaling an angle of the ceiling or assuming some preposterous attitude.

Yet, after all, I do not know but the darkness was less depressing than the silence. It is true I could myself have broken the deathlike stillness; I could have called my wife, obtained a response and—been summoned to explain. I would not have hesitated in any other less ridiculous emergency, but I dared not call on my wife to get me out of the darkness and silence of my own chamber. Still, I longed for a sound, a murmur, a phrase, the fall of a picture, the purring of the cat—any sound that would stir up a good, healthy, living emotion.

And the sound came at last. It was a voice that quavered, that questioned who I was and what I was doing there—a voice so thin, so uncertain, seemingly so distant that I could have sworn it had issued from the street or from the housetop. It was so unreal that I shivered. I was so amazed I could not answer. I leaned hopelessly, heavily, against the marble-like surface near which I stood and steadied my knees. It yielded suddenly, and I lurched violently after it. Then came a crash and a shower of splintered crystal. It is

strange, but I realized what had happened at once.

I had fallen into the oblong mirror-door of my wife's wardrobe, which had been standing half-open. Almost at the same moment there rose shrill accents, the jostling of chairs, the noise of quick movements and a thick hail of piquant snaps and chirping whipcord. The cat, leaping here and there, snarled fiercely, and the whip, eloquent and sinister, whistled and crackled in the blind darkness until all in a flash I felt as if a loose nest of yellow-jackets had burst about my burning neck and ears.

For a brief space that seemed an eternity all was confusion worse confounded, and then came a dazzling flash of light. My daughter, lamp in hand, appeared on the threshold of the chamber and beheld one of those pictures such as imagination seldom paints—a somber picture in which things could be not only seen but heard.

There were moving figures in the midst of shadows and lurid reflections. The cat, perched on the mantel, humped like a fiend, was venting demoniac cries; my wife, in a white gown that fluttered and with hair tossed wildly, was panting, expostulating, snapping her whip victoriously, and coiled at her feet, in the person of the burglar, lay the most pitiable being conceivable, in a half-swoon, yet still shuddering and moaning, cruelly humiliated, terribly scotched.



FORMED TO FIT

JAGGLES—Why don't they allow children in flats?

WAGGLES—That's something I could never understand. They are just about the proper size for them.



THE COUNT CAME FIRST

“MISS BONDY has married some blooming titled foreigner.”

“Count?”

“I think he did.”

GOD'S MESSENGER

By G. Vere Tyler

SUNDAY morning. A densely packed church. A preacher preaching, and before him a breathless audience intently listening. Tears; gasps . . . the benediction. A gust of cold air from the silently opened doors, and a sea of people surging forth.

The preacher came down hurriedly from the pulpit and made his way out with the people, bowing, smiling, shaking hands, accepting eulogy.

Suddenly a woman grasped him by the arm, and he turned quickly and looked at her.

She attempted to speak, but faltered, and tears gushed to her eyes. He saw that she was deathly pale—the sermon had overcome her.

“Compose yourself!” He spoke impatiently, adding, under his breath: “Go into my study. I will visit you there.”

Then he passed on as before, bowing, smiling, accepting eulogy.

The church emptied quickly. The lights round the pulpit went out with a flash, and a man walked quickly up the dim aisles, peering into the pews and picking up a forgotten article here and there. He passed the woman standing where the preacher had left her, staring vacantly, as if in a trance.

When he reached the door he called to her: “We must close up!”

“Where is the minister’s study?”

The man pointed. “In the rear, to the right.”

She walked quickly in the direction indicated, and in another moment was facing the preacher, who, watch in hand, was waiting for her, with his eyes fixed on the door.

He was a man of striking appearance; tall and dark, of a spare, nervous build. His arms and legs were abnormally long. His chest was lean and narrow, suggesting disease; not now, perhaps, but in the future. He had a slight scholarly stoop. His face was of the elongated type, delicately moulded, sensitive, alert, the face of an inspirer. Fame had come to him early. He was barely thirty-four.

As he looked sharply at her his dark eyes shone. A lock of raven-black hair hung across his brow, where it had fallen from some wild toss of the head. He was still flushed and excited from his oratorical efforts.

The room was bare, save only for a couple of chairs, a desk and an ordinary lounge. There were a few good pictures on the walls—scenes from the Bible, pastoral scenes and a large oil painting of himself. On the desk was a pile of unopened letters.

The preacher seated himself in his desk-chair, revolved it suddenly and faced the woman, whom he had already seated with a gesture.

An amused smile, tinged possibly with a little cruelty, flitted across his countenance. He had seen others like her. She was one of the penalties of his genius, of his profession.

“Well?” he asked her.

She did not answer.

He tapped her lightly on the hand.

“Come! Come now! Let us have it! What is the trouble? You have been coming to my church about two years, haven’t you?”

“Yes.”

"I thought so. For two years I have been watching you——"

"Yes?" she interrupted, her face flushing.

"And for two years have inwardly smiled at your breathless interest in my oratorical rhapsodies, and very often——" he smiled outwardly now—"my oratorical platitudes."

The woman started. Her eyes, which had been intently fixed on him, grew wide.

"This interest," the preacher went on, quickly, "while very gratifying to my vanity, is in danger of jeopardizing me; therefore I deemed it best, when I saw you so overcome to-day, to speak to you. No doubt, madam, you think me a very wonderful man!"

She looked up with a rapt expression to a fine picture of the Saviour hanging above his head.

"I think, sir, you are next to Him!"

"Exactly. And this thought, thoughts of this kind, have given you many exalted feelings, many fine emotions, I suppose?"

"They are what I live on."

"I see." The preacher rubbed the finger nails of his left hand with his thumb and examined them minutely. "What you live on!" He looked up. "Now, would you mind going into the details of these emotions?"

"Sir?"

"Would you mind explaining to me what effect all this has on you?"

"Effect? I do not understand you."

"You will later. You can describe your feelings to me, can't you?"

She clasped her hands before her and leaned forward. "Oh! how often I have longed to do so!"

"Well, now is your opportunity," he smiled.

"Yes, but being in your presence confuses me; I am not myself. I have no words."

He attempted playfully to put her at her ease. "Why, I am not so terrible, am I?"

Her eyes became moist and luminous. "It is the thought of Sunday,

of the hour in which I am to enter this church and behold you, that sustains me during the week," she burst forth.

"Indeed! And of course you feel the necessity of being sustained in this or—well, some way?"

"If you knew my life you would not ask that question!" she exclaimed, excitedly.

"No? Why?"

"Because I am a most miserable woman."

"Yes? Well, that is too bad! And coming to church has been a great consolation to you?"

For answer her eyes filled with tears.

"That is very gratifying to me. But tell me, why are you, with your youth, health and charms, so miserable?"

"Oh, sir, do not speak to me of my wretched, insignificant self!"

"My dear lady, it is you who are in trouble."

"My troubles are consoled by a word or thought of you."

"Very well then, speak of me."

"But I have told you that, while I have longed to do so, I am powerless. Your presence robs me of speech, of my strength."

"Let me help you. You look forward to coming here Sunday, you say, and this thought sustains you during the week. How?"

"Because then I am to see you."

"And why does that benefit you so?"

"Oh, how can I tell? I only know——"

"Well?"

"That from the moment you appear before me all the sorrow of my life slips away, and I am in heaven."

"Explain that."

"What?"

"How the sight of me produces such happy effects."

"How can I make you understand?"

"I am not dull of comprehension."

"But I might offend you."

"You are not likely to."

"Well, then . . ."

"Go on."

"First, you see there is the empty

church. I generally come early, before the congregation assembles. I take my seat in the silence, in the gloom, and with my eyes fixed on the pulpit I think of you."

"Yes," the preacher said, quietly.

"The minutes that separate us seem to be miles of shining roads on which you are traveling toward me. Each minute means that you are nearer. I long yet dread for them to pass, desiring yet fearing the great joy that is to be mine. Do you understand me?"

"Oh, yes."

"The coming in of the people disturbs me; their exchanged greetings and whisperings make me angry. How can they be so indifferent when you are on your way to them? It is irreverence! There are times when I could rise up, cry aloud and rebuke them! Finally they are seated, and my peace is in a measure restored, but my excitement increases. The crowd, the fact that they are all there, means that it is nearing the time for you to arrive and appear before them—before me! The organ breaks the stillness. They rise and sing. I do not see or hear, but I can feel it all; and then suddenly, as if invisible walls had parted—you are there!"

The preacher smiled.

"For a moment after you have appeared I seem to lose sight of you, grow dizzy, as if a terrific blow had been struck me! Strange feelings steal through me, as if my blood had suddenly changed into some golden, intoxicating wine! My eyes close—when I open them——"

"When you open them?"

"—I see you standing in the radiance of a great light, divine inspiration on your countenance, a halo above your head, a holy message on your lips! Again my eyes close, again that delightful languor steals over me, and there are times I feel afraid lest I shall swoon or expire there before you, before them all!"

"As bad as that?"

She sprang to her feet.

"You are not mocking me, sir?"

"No, no, my dear child, not at all.

Sit down." He took her hands and drew her to her seat. "I was only thinking what a fine thing it must be to feel like that; in other words, to be a woman—of course, occasionally."

"You!"

The preacher laughed.

"I whom you think so near a god! Yes, even I must envy you your emotional capacities. What heights you attain—you women, I mean—and how you revel there! No wonder that magnetic actors, musicians and orators like myself meet with such marvelous—I might say such absurd success, since we have such instruments to play on!"

She stared at him.

"It is too bad that having produced these ecstasies, we, ourselves, never actually get the benefit of them. There are, no doubt, some extraordinary experiences among you but feebly understood by the men who witness your repressed ravings and attempt to describe them."

The woman flushed.

"You do not understand me! I was referring to the effect you produced on my soul—on my spiritual nature, which in you, and you alone, has found satisfaction."

The preacher's eyes flashed amusement.

"By the most sensuous indulgences," he replied.

She started.

"Sensuous!"

"Certainly."

"How can you apply such a word to me?"

"Surely you don't suppose such sex attractions exist in what we call heaven, do you?"

"What?" she asked, sharply.

"I said you surely do not think that such sex attractions exist in heaven."

"You are ridiculing me!"

"No, I am trying to fathom you."

"But your questions hurt me!"

"Nothing is further from my intention."

"I am not prepared to answer such questions. I have never analyzed myself, or any of these things."

"Being a woman, I suppose not."

"Nor do I care for them! All that I ask of you is not to speak lightly of the consolation that has come to me through you."

"What *is* that consolation?"

"A realization of the spiritual."

"But, madam, that is impossible."

"Why?"

"Because I am not spiritual."

"Not spiritual?"

"Not at all," the preacher went on, lightly; "I am simply a professional man with a talent, just as Paderewski or Sir Henry Irving has a talent, and withal, I am very material."

She turned pale.

"You do not know what you are saying!"

"That talent," the preacher continued, calmly, "entitles me to no credit. I use it to make a living, just as they do."

"Oh, my good God!"

"I tell you this because your imagination is carrying you too far, because, in spite of your romantic and effusive temperament, you are intelligent and can understand."

"I do not want to understand!"

"Of course not, but I wish to explain. These exalted feelings that you have so graphically described are due simply to the fact that you have been making the very common mistake of ignoring the man and revering his gifts."

"Are they not one and the same?"

"Certainly not. A man's gifts entitle him to no more merit than a woman's beauty, for instance, entitles her to merit."

"What then?"

"His manhood."

There was silence. He broke it.

"What do you know of me as a man?"

"All that is necessary to know."

"And that is?"

"That you inspire that which is grand and glorious!"

"In your exalted condition, under the spell of my gift, I *seem* to do that."

"But you do!"

He thought awhile.

"There are heirs of God," he finally said, absently, "who squander their God-given talents to dazzle, I will not say delude, just as the heirs of men squander their material inheritance to dazzle and delude."

"You should not speak of yourself with men!"

"But since I am a man, why not?"

"You are God's messenger!"

"Am I?" he replied, cynically.

"To doubt it is sacrilege!"

The preacher mused a moment, then went on, as if addressing himself: "A man who does not abuse these God-given gifts that I have referred to, but who uses them solely for good, for an increase of the world's supply of happiness—yes, he is God's messenger."

"And do not you?"

"I have often asked myself the question."

She looked at him, bewildered.

"What you are saying is terrible! You are shocking every nerve in my body."

"Not a difficult task."

"You are deliberately, ruthlessly," she went on, vehemently, "tearing yourself from the pedestal on which I placed you——"

"I have no right to a pedestal," was the quiet response.

"—and adored you!" she cried, exasperated into confession. "Do you know that for two years I have adored you?"

"I know that for two years you have feasted on an idea."

"Do you call starving myself, fasting, praying, sitting in cold rooms, giving up worldly acquaintances, theatres, giving up everything that made life for me before, living on an idea?"

"Yes, even if you did those things."

"I did do them! Do you doubt me? I did them. I denied myself, sacrificed, suffered to be worthy of this hour when you would permit me in your presence, when you would hold sacred communion with me—and now!"

He was silent.

"And now," she went on, between sobs that accompanied the tears rolling down her cheeks, "I am ridiculed and despised. You see in me nothing, and place me in the category of silly women who fall in love with clergymen and actors!"

"Oh, no; it is more serious than that! Such women are not dangerous; you are."

Impulsively she dashed away her tears.

"Dangerous! I?"

"Certainly, because your attractions make your wild dreams possibilities."

"You call what I have been telling you dreams?"

"I do."

"A person dreams for a moment!"

"Some dream all their lives."

"I tell you that it has been to me two years of self-denial and sacrifice!"

"People have done more, with a purpose in view."

"In God's name, what do you mean?"

"That you are in the throes of a fierce desire, unconscious, perhaps, that has caused you to overestimate realities."

"In other words, that I am insane!"

"Oh, no. We are all, at times, the victims of delusions. These dreams are the highly tinted veils of deception, which Nature, as a subtle hypnotist, holds before our eyes till we are ready for the truth. It is just as if you believed that a stained glass window was an actual scene, and someone should suddenly open it. It seems to me that you are ready to have the window opened—ready for the truth; that is why I am attempting to show it to you. Do you want it?"

"I want what I have had!"

"They all do," the preacher said, curtly. Then his eyes followed a funeral procession passing the window. Hers did not leave his face.

"If I thought you were not what I have believed you——"

"Well?" he asked, turning slowly and looking at her.

"I should want to die!"

"Not a bit of it!" the man sneered.

"If I thought," she hesitated, "you were not sincere!"

A smile crept into the preacher's eyes.

"My dear lady, do you think that you are sincere?"

"I?"

"You."

"I profess nothing!"

"You have been professing very much."

"I am not a preacher!"

"No, you are a woman!"

"And if I am?"

"The fact demands that you be something higher, the preacher's inspiration. Did you never think of that?"

She did not answer.

"You should do so, and of what you are attempting to inspire."

"Oh, talk to me of my soul! Discuss that with me!"

"I am doing so, by showing you how much body you have!"

Suddenly her form relaxed wearily.

"How cruel you are!" she exclaimed.

"What harm have I ever done you that you should hurt me so?"

"None, my dear child. I have never allowed you to harm me."

Over her face spread a burning flush, which, receding instantly, left her pale.

"And this is you," she said, calmly looking at him, "whom for two years I have adored!"

"Nonsense!" said the preacher.

"Do you suppose that because a man's presence thrills you, because his voice causes your heart to leap into your throat, because he suggests a few romantic sentiments, it is love you feel?"

"Then what is love?"

"Shall I tell you?"

"Yes."

He leaned forward, looked deep into her eyes, and told her a story.

"That," she said, trembling, when he had concluded and fallen back in his chair, "was self-effacement!"

"Woman's love is self-effacement," he replied, coldly.

"I forgot love when I found you!"

"I thought you indulged it," he laughed.

"I mean men."

"Madam, I am a man."

"I will never look on you as such!"

"I am quite sure that if you knew me well you would. I am very much of a man who, if your dreams were fulfilled, would shock you by his masculine instincts. Do you begin to see?"

"I begin to see you!"

"And not yourself?"

"Myself! Why should I see myself? It is you, you! you whom I have revered as God himself. I see *you* who are killing me, by taking away every prop that my wretched being clung to."

"They were rotten props."

"They were you! I want that *you* back! I want my experiences through you! I want to drift into those joys that showered on me from you, and caused me to forget this miserable world of cruelty! Call them dreams, what you will, I care not. I want them. I cannot renounce them. Oh, if you knew what they have been to me! You do know, you know all, but you do not care! Oh, to have failed to make you understand!"

He reached over and caught her wrist.

"Child, you have not failed to make me understand."

"You think me unworthy?"

"I think you unwise. These things that you desire, these violent experiences like the one you have to-day described, are all unwise; more than that, they are Dead Sea fruit, shut in the cold palm of the hand, that succeeds in grasping and exhausting them! Ashes! The illusions of imagination's children! Look into my face! What do you see there?"

An exclamation broke from her.

"You see that I know," he said, and released her.

For a moment she continued to stare at him. Her face was blanched; when she spoke, her voice, scarce above her breath, was husky.

"Do you mean that you have been wicked, like other men?"

He did not speak.

"You have yielded to temptations?" she whispered.

"Have you?"

"I?"

"Let me answer for you. You have! It was because of those temptations, which had turned into Dead Sea fruit, that you turned to me. We all turn to something. I turned to something. You were tired of it all; tired of easy conquest, that so soon revolted you. You fixed your eye on a fruit you thought so high on the tree that it must be worth attaining. The fact that you believed it difficult to attain interested you. If possessed, you expected satisfaction. Now that you have brought it on a level with your eye, now that it is laid bare to your inspection, what do you see?"

She looked at him intently.

"When you preach, don't you believe what you say?"

"Generally I do believe what I say, not always. The physician does not take all the medicines he prescribes. He simply knows that they are necessary for others."

"Ah!" she breathed, her form again relaxing. "You are not what I believed—a saint inspired of God, suffering for men."

"And what of you?"

"Be done with me!" Her eyes suddenly flashed angrily.

"No, not until you know yourself! You are condemning me, now let me see what justice you will mete out to yourself."

He rose to his feet and oratorically stretched forth his long arm.

"Listen," he cried; "many a poor creature coming to my church, with your intention—a poor creature not possessed of your Madonna face, your cultivation; not gifted with your gentle manner, your subtle powers of deception, would have been, if discovered by my parishioners, cast into the streets—into a prison house, if it were possible!"

Even her lips were colorless.

"What was my intention?"

"To fascinate me!"

She fell back in her seat.

"For two years you have lived in the atmosphere of this thought, breathing in the poison of it! For two years you have left nothing undone to render yourself seductive to my masculine eye. Just as you have dragged others to your feet, you thought—no, no, you need not protest; those wonderful eyes of yours have never failed to look, those rich lips never failed to taste, when no one was looking—you thought in the end to drag *me*! More than that, you thought to drag me to your feet there in the presence of others, to stand with your foot on my throat while they watched my struggles. You wished, while gratifying a passion, to satisfy your vanity and realize a cherished ambition. In other words, you exulted in the thought of making a fool of me, possibly of ruining me—and you call that love! You are, as I have said, a dangerous woman, because you possess those subtle characteristics that first entice and then rest a man, and men are tired; all men are tired, and mostly through the restlessness of women. But, madam, there are men who live above their temptations, not because they are preachers, but because they are wise. This, coming as you have in contact with their weaknesses, may seem incredible. It is nevertheless true. I do not say that they deserve credit for it. I simply state a fact. Possibly, in my case, it may be that temptations have become common—that I have too many. Did you ever look over my congregation? If so, you have observed that my garden is full of rare and beautiful flowers. In spite of that fact, however, do not feel offended by the thought that one charm of yours has been lost on me. Such is not the case. I have seen, do see them all, but I am not in a position to avail myself of them. I am a busy man, a public man, with jealous eyes on me. I have not the time, the courage—and after all, perhaps, the inclination for concentration. Certainly I could not rest easy with a woman so controlled by her emotions as you are. I have my wife,

my children, my home interests to think of, and I am responsible—" he smiled—"to my parishioners for my good conduct. Believe me," he continued, with enthusiasm, "I am appreciative of *all* feminine charms, to the extent that I might emulate Solomon were I of his day, but then I am not. You are an attractive woman, you have interested me; but in believing that you could concentrate me you will see that you were considering me from a very limited standpoint."

She drooped in her seat, speechless. His last words she did not hear. Another thought held her spellbound. What he had told her concerning herself and her intention was the truth. She had never known it before; she did know it now, and the realization appalled her. She despised him. She despised herself more. A dull, sickening feeling, half anger, half pain, stole over her. This digging down into the crannies of one's being—discovering and unearthing all the evil—was a new way of treating sinners; a wretched, miserable way, that staggered her and left her humiliated in her own sight—unclean. Those mistakes, those failures, those temptations she had yielded to—her face burnt her—why rake them up in all their suddenly revealed hideousness before her eyes? She shuddered. And he who was doing these things, he who had criticised and condemned her—who declared himself above temptation—what was he? A creature incapable of experiencing temptation; a lover of the world at large—a world that, year after year, without heart, he swayed with his eloquence. Yes, this alone he loved; this world that paid him homage in coin and adulation! He loved it because of that coin and adulation; gave himself to it; his life, his powers for the sake of it! He stood apart from suffering souls like herself and radiated his glowing power, blinding and melting them—himself unmelted. She was but one of many who looked at him longingly, week after week, over a sea of faces, and who would never reach him.

The preacher rose and took his position by the end of the desk, making a pulpit of it.

Her eyes followed him. He placed his hand on one corner of it and took up a new theme, just as he changed his position in the pulpit and took up a new theme. The old feeling swept through her, the old fascination, born of the habit of thought. Her eyes closed, but she opened them quickly and continued to look at him. Occasionally she blinked them, to shut out the light that seemed gathering about him.

"The compliment that you have paid me," he said, deliberately, "was very sweet, and I appreciate it. More than that, it was a help to me, and I am grateful. On dull days, when the light of my brain was dim, I have sought your illumined face for inspiration. I found it. Perfectly conscious of your evil designs on me, I have not failed to benefit myself by all that I could possibly secure from you without harm to myself. I am a selfish man, conscious of the fact. You are an ambitious woman, hungry for a manifestation of your powers, unconscious of it. I grant that you were unconscious of all the harmful intentions of which I have accused you. That is feminine. A man exposes his weapons and fights, a woman secretes hers—at times, as in your case, she does not even admit to herself that she possesses any—and fights. I must say that in many cases man is not her equal. He must possess without loss to feel satisfaction; she will lose all to possess, and gloat in the highest satisfaction over her possession. A man cherishes what he fairly possesses. A woman who obtains at the sacrifice of self despises her possession and immediately begins to mutilate it, and when it is almost destroyed hangs it up for ridicule. That is what you meant to do with me. My sole protection was that I knew you. You will never know yourself; your natural dissimulation will prevent that, but you can and should know men for your own protection, and that's why I am attempt-

ing to reveal them to you. Perhaps I am the only one, facing the light of your eyes, who would find himself capable of the task. I do not say that this knowledge of men will bring you happiness, but it may cause you to escape unhappiness. So far as I am concerned, the sensations you were living in could not possibly have ended in anything but the disappointment you have experienced. It might have come some other way, but it would have come. Perhaps, indulging you on your own terms, I might have tired of you."

She did not speak.

"My dear madam, to throw yourself at a man's feet, relying on your charms to drag him finally to your own and then destroy him, is a dangerous experiment. Some women have done it successfully, but they must have been careful in the selection of a subject, must have known more of the man than you did of me. I possess none of the characteristics that you have attributed to me. They were all creations of your imagination. Men are *not* gods; a woman, however," he bowed very sweetly to her, "may sometimes be an angel. Be she woman or angel, or both in one, her happiness does not come by inspiring men's passions and then indulging what she has inspired to her self-disgust. Few men are worth your sentimental interest. You see that I am not. Do you see those streets out there, how bare and desolate? Remember the crowd that enlivened them yesterday! That's as a woman's heart is who allows an army of men to tramp through it."

He paused.

"Now you are preaching," the woman said, coldly.

"Perhaps. Let me go on. You need preaching. No? Yes, just a word. I want to bring you first to consciousness, and then to a condition of mental composure. I may have my reasons. I have told you that you are a dangerous woman. Do become a sensible one. Recognize yourself. You are in the habit of excusing indulgence on the plea

of weakness. You are not in the least weak. You enjoy the sensation of surrender, and indulge it for the sake of disarming. You imagined yourself weak with me. In reality you were rather strong, but not quite strong enough, and circumstances were against you. You should, on the strength of what I have told you, feel glad. Failure in the unworthy is beneficial. In that line you have been, perhaps, too successful. Have you ever considered the train of people whose lives have been changed, saddened, wrecked by your acts, unconscious acts, and all excused on the plea of weakness? Put that army before you and attempt to follow it up a hill. Include them all, men, women, children. What I am trying to make you aware of is that these unconscious indulgences are as disastrous to yourself and others as conscious ones. You should review them, take them out and lay them before you, estimate and understand them. This isn't preaching, it is wisdom. Madam, you have had some narrow escapes."

There was silence. Presently, in a husky voice, she demanded: "What do *you* know of me?"

The preacher merely looked at her. When her eyes lowered he continued. "I have been trying to show you, not the sufferings of others—let those pass—but how little these sensations you have lived in will stand for in the end, when you demand return for having harbored them. How little I stand for! Other men may stand for even less. Some of them are brutes, pure and simple. Remember that. Your desire for the spiritual is very sweet; but, believe me, it is not to be attained by going into ecstasies over a sensational preacher, and trying to drag him to your feet by flattery. And now, my dear child, I must leave you."

He walked over and extended his hand. She refused it. He smiled the gentle smile that had first fascinated her.

"Shake hands with me. I am not so bad, not so much worse than the

others, and I am not your enemy. I have a high appreciation of—well, perhaps I should say of what I believe you are capable of becoming, and I am your friend. I will always be your friend. This is offering more than you asked for." He took her face in his two hands and looked deep into her eyes. "I cannot specially manifest that friendship until you become a more sensible woman. Do you understand?"

"No."

"Well, good-bye. Be at church next Sunday. I am going to help you."

He opened the door for her, and she passed out.

He paused, and then went to the window and watched her. The day had grown somber, a few flakes of snow were falling. She walked rapidly away from him into the gloom, then out of sight. He turned and seated himself at his desk, and taking up his letters proceeded to break the seals and go through them.

At the end of an hour he rose to go. Her glove lay on the floor. He took it up and looked at it very tenderly. Then he put it away in a drawer of his desk.

"Poor, sensitive, imaginative child!" he said, with his eyes still fixed on the closed drawer, "pliable as a twig. What a brute the husband must be that she is not at *his* feet, the dear habit of his life! How perfectly unconscious she was of the fact that I was simply describing to her the ordinary woman—of her type, of course! It is the old story," he went on, dreamily, "of the delicate vine, trailing its sweet length through the poisoned forest in quest of the oak."

He took up his hat, but paused again. "Next Sunday I will preach to her—to all women. I will cure her entirely of this infatuation, and then——"

He looked at his watch, buttoned his overcoat about his tall, slim form, and hurriedly leaving the church swung himself up the street with long, careless strides.

BLASÉ

THE scene—a ball. A chappie he
Of whom it some day will be said,
“He perished—yawning—of ennui.”

She sat and watched him for a space,
And smiled a little as she read
The perfect blankness on his face,

Then asked him, “Do you recollect
If, as a baby, everything
Had such a palsyng effect

“Upon your mind? And did you view
With cold contempt your teething-ring?
Or when a rattle, large and new,

“Was given you as a reward
For abstinence from having squalled,
Were you particularly bored?”

Some chord the question seemed to touch
Of recollection, as he drawled,
“Most likely, if it rattled *much*.”

C. E. JOHNSTONE.



AN ECHO FROM THE WEDDING TOUR

DEAREST MAMMA:

Think of it! George and I have been married a whole week, and not a thing has occurred to mar our happiness.

Lovingly,

BESSIE.



CERTAINLY EXTRAORDINARY

FACETIOUS DINER (*to very tall and exceedingly procrastinating servitor*)—For more than one reason you might be called a long waiter.
WAITER—Yes'r; I sometimes measure half a day from tip to tip, sir.

LE COLLIER D'OR

Par Quesnay de Beaurepaire

LE collier d'or pendait à une branche au bord du chemin, le beau collier d'or incrusté de pierres précieuses. Il étincelait sous les feux du soleil et se balançait au souffle du vent avec l'éclat et la grâce des serpents d'Asie. Nul gardien ne veillait au pied de l'arbre, aucune voix humaine n'annonçait à l'entour la présence d'un maître. C'était comme l'image de la tentation dans la solitude.

Or, voici qu'un jeune gentilhomme, revenant de la chasse, apparut au détour du sentier. Il chevauchait lentement, la tête baissée, et soupirait avec mélancolie. Son costume délabré, sa monture misérable, ses chiens efflanqués, tout annonçait l'indigence. Jamais cadet plus mécontent de sa destinée n'avait cheminé avec plus d'amertume vers un repas d'ermite servi dans un castel en ruines.

Soudain, parmi les ramées flexibles, son front reçut un choc violent. Il crut que la pierre d'une fronde l'avait blessé, s'arrêta brusquement : devant ses yeux se balançait le beau collier d'or. Je ne sais qui l'emporta dans son esprit, de l'admiration ou de la surprise. Enfin, un vif éclair l'ayant ébloui :

"Voilà," se dit-il, "un joyau capable, sinon d'apporter la richesse, au moins de faire oublier la pauvreté. Je regrette qu'il ne soit pas mien."

Le chevalier regarda autour de lui : pas d'être vivant. Ses yeux se portèrent sur le sol : nulle empreinte de pas. Le pur métal était vierge de chiffre comme d'inscription. Afin de mieux s'assurer, le chasseur prit son cor et sonna des appels. L'écho seul répondit. Durant sa longue médita-

tion, il estima que ce serait folie de laisser trésor semblable aux corbeaux. Sans doute, aux temps des premiers ancêtres, l'or exposé de la sorte le long des champs était pieusement respecté ; mais depuis le bon duc Rollon toutes choses ont bien changé. "Ce collier sans maître appartient au premier qui passera ; n'est-ce donc pas moi ?" Il finit par croire qu'un bon génie l'avait placé là à son intention, et, après avoir exhalé son dernier scrupule en sonnant un dernier appel, il emporta le trésor à son logis.

J'ai dit que cet homme était jeune ; on devine par là qu'il fut prodigue et s'enivra d'apparences. Un beau coursier, des vêtements somptueux, les soupers bruyants, la musique et la danse, avec des dames ravies de sa bonne mine, devinrent l'objet de ses joies et le but de sa vie. Il s'apprit à rire sans en avoir envie, à parler pour ne rien dire, à nourrir son esprit de la sottise des autres. On l'apprécia fort. Son pécule devenu léger, il résolut d'épouser une veuve, laide, mais riche, laquelle voyait son peu de cervelle avec une faveur marquée. Par malheur, ses assiduités donnèrent ombrage à un homme d'épée, hanté des mêmes désirs et peu disposé à céder la place. Et voilà la guerre allumée. Les deux amoureux de la veuve allèrent sur le terrain et notre cadet en revint fort éclopé, gueux comme devant et bien marié. Le regret des jouissances du monde lui rendait plus pesant le fardeau de la pauvreté.

Cependant, le joaillier acquéreur du collier, ayant attendu pour le revendre l'époque des grandes foires, se mit en route avant l'aube. Sans

prendre garde à la rosée, non plus qu'à une brise piquante, il s'avancait d'un pas allègre, supputant d'avance le gros profit qu'il allait faire. A vrai dire, il avait abusé de l'ignorance du gentilhomme; mais un bijou de cette beauté ne méritait-il pas qu'on pêchât un peu pour l'obtenir? Et lorsqu'on a derrière son jardin un clos de vigne dont la possession serait douce au cœur, n'est-il pas permis de bannir quelque peu les scrupules afin d'en payer le prix au voisin avide? Donc sans crainte et sans remords, notre bourgeois doublait le pas et chantonnait amoureuxment: "J'ai le collier, j'aurai la vigne."

Une voix goguenarde s'éleva dans le bois:

"Tu aimes donc bien à boire?"

L'interrupteur, qui sauta aussitôt sur la route, était un de ces rôdeurs à la tournure inquiétante, que jamais voyageur pacifique ne voit avec plaisir devant soi. Aussi notre joaillier prit-il le large.

"Arrêtez," fit l'autre en le poursuivant; "puisque vous avez tant de hâte, souffrez que je vous allège. Vous avez parlé d'un collier, il me semble? C'est fardeau trop lourd pour courir."

Ce disant, il l'appréhende, le marchand se défend avec désespoir, les bâtons s'entre-choquent; mais le voleur déploie plus d'adresse, s'empare du trésor et s'éloigne. Le marchand se relève avec peine, laissant une oreille sur le champ de bataille. Il gémit, il a perdu le collier d'or.

Le larron ne se souciait pas de partager avec les truands de sa bande. Il attendit donc la nuit, déroba une pioche au village, creusa un trou et enterra son butin à l'orée du bois. Cette précaution était d'un sage. Toutefois un peu plus tard, se sentant traqué, ce voleur ravisé revint avec son jeune frère, confident, sûr et discret.

"Là se trouve bijou de grand prix. Si, ce qu'au diable ne plaise, j'étais jamais mis en prison, tu le retirerais de céans et le vendrais afin de rompre mon geôlier et me rendre libre. Souviens-toi et silence."

Ce malandrin, heureux jusque-là dans ses entreprises, tomba, enfin, dans une embuscade, et les verroux d'un cachot se fermèrent sur lui. Incontinent, son frère courut au bois et fouilla la terre, mais hélas! ne découvrit, au lieu du collier d'or, que le cadavre d'un lévrier. Ce n'était point la monnaie qui pût tenter un geôlier; aussi n'y eut-il point d'évasion et le voleur fut pendu.

D'où provenait l'étrange métamorphose? De ceci, que la belle Isaure, coquette en renom, choyée par la fortune, venait d'éprouver son premier déplaisir. Le doux lévrier, élevé par elle au rang de compagnon et de favori, ne dormait plus sur un carreau de velours! Il gisait sur les dalles, victime de sa gourmandise. C'en était fait; plus de caresses, plus d'ébats, et aussi que de larmes! O bête si chère, que nul homme n'avait égalée, ne plus orner ton cou de frais rubans, sera-ce vivre? . . . Allons, maître jardinier, faites disparaître aux yeux de madame le corps glacé de son meilleur ami, et cherchez, au loin, un site poétique où le plus regretté des lévriers puisse reposer à l'ombre des chênes murmurants!

La coquette eut ses vapeurs, et toute profane compagne fut bannie de sa maison. Le serviteur, cependant, emporta le chien jusqu'au bois et choisit une place mystérieuse, où la terre moins dure offrait un travail plus facile. Il creusa diligemment . . . et mit à découvert le collier d'or. Pas n'est besoin d'ajouter qu'il fut ébahi; mais, esclave de ses devoirs domestiques, le jardinier enleva le bijou pour poser le lévrier, afin que l'un ne gênât point l'autre. Puis, comme il était vertueux, ce bonhomme rendit compte en ces termes de sa mission:

"En déposant le chien sous la mousse, voilà ce que j'ai trouvé parmi les cailloux."

Un cri d'admiration fut la réponse. La dame tourna cent fois la parure dans ses mains blanches, la fit miroiter aux feux de sa lampe, l'appuya sur sa peau de satin, se trouva plus belle et fut consolée. Une petite voix secrète

murmurait: "Ce collier n'est pas à toi." La coquetterie répliquait: "Ce qui me sied m'appartient." Cette raison parut la meilleure et, comme on ne se pare que pour plaire, les amies et les jeunes seigneurs de la contrée furent tôt conviés. Les bijoux du bois opérèrent le miracle espéré; les femmes devinrent jalouses et les seigneurs amoureux; madame oublia son lévrier pour jouir de cette double félicité. Ce triomphe dura plus d'une semaine, le collier excitait l'enthousiasme. Mais un cruel événement mit fin à ces luttes galantes; la belle dame perdit tout à coup sa fraîcheur; une maladie inconnue (à laquelle les médecins donnèrent bien vite un nom grec) ravagea son visage. Il fallait un remède ou la mort. La pauvre dame, bien dolente, résolut de recourir aux savants de tous pays; mais vie joyeuse et bourse pleine ne vont guère ensemble; aussi la malade dut-elle se soumettre à envoyer quérir un digne usurier de la province.

"Or, ça," dit-elle en montrant le collier d'or, "j'ai besoin d'une grosse somme, prêtez-moi sur ce gage."

Le vieillard ouvrit sa houppe, tira sa balance et ses besicles; regarda, tâta, pesa, fit jouer au soleil l'or et les pierreries, opina d'un geste, compta les florins, glissa le collier dans une double poche et disparut. En descendant les degrés, l'homme conservait à grand-peine un masque impassible; sa joie débordait. Avec une pareille écarvelée, le gage ne serait jamais retiré; il l'aurait à lui, rien qu'à lui! Sa hâte était si grande de mettre en sûreté son trésor, qu'il arriva chez lui, dans le faubourg, plus d'une heure avant l'Angélus. La servante, au bruit de ses pas, se sentit fort dépitée, car s'estimant libre jusqu'au crépuscule, la bonne pièce festoyait un sien cousin d'Angleterre, sorte de reître qui revenait des guerres lointaines.

"Haut le pied!" fit la commère, "cachez-vous derrière cette porte tandis que j'enlèverai les reliefs; le maître est notablement avare, et s'il vous apercevait buvant son vin, la querelle serait âpre."

Ainsi fut fait. L'usurier entra, vint à la cheminée; sous un prétexte, éloigna sa chambrière; et, se croyant seul, palpa longuement le collier, le contempla avec amour à la lumière du foyer. Le soudard, l'œil collé à une fente, ne perdait pas un geste, comparable au chat qui suit du regard une pelote balancée. Une sueur chaude mouillait son front. Finalement, le vieillard passa dans une autre salle, la cuisinière reparut et son cousin prit congé. Aux premières ténèbres, des barres de fer furent posées aux portes et aux fenêtres, suivant l'habitude, et le bonhomme rêva doucement à ses bijoux. Le démon veillait. Au coup de minuit, l'Anglais revint à pas muets avec une échelle, pénétra dans la maison par le grenier, et comme il n'avait pas oublié d'apporter sa dague, le possesseur du trésor passa de vie à trépas. La chambrière se réveilla au bruit, et sans voir personne se pencha à sa lucarne, et cria d'autant plus fort pour sauver son maître qu'elle avait plus peur pour elle-même. Le meurtrier, cependant, se heurtait partout aux barres, sans pouvoir trouver d'issue, de telle sorte qu'il dut reprendre sa première voie, et qu'en arrivant au pas de l'échelle, pressant le très cher collier contre sa poitrine, il se vit serré de près par des villageois armés de fourches, qui à grands cris s'attachèrent à ses pas.

Le soleil levant éclaira cette chasse furieuse. Le soudard, les bras repliés sur son butin, perdait haleine; les pointes du collier le déchiraient comme des griffes, il le sentait plus lourd, toujours plus lourd. Soudain son angoisse redoubla; une rivière lui barrait la route. Ne pensant plus qu'à sauver sa vie, le misérable laissa tomber sa proie dans l'épaisse herbe de la prairie, atteignit le bord d'un bond suprême et s'élança dans l'eau; mais le sang de l'avare brûlait ses mains; ses oreilles tintaient. . . . Il succomba à l'épouvante et fut englouti.

Aux heures tièdes de la soirée, une petite fille s'ébattait dans le pré

solitaire, sous la conduite de l'aïeule. Tantôt elle poursuivait les beaux papillons, avec de grands éclats de rire; tantôt, essoufflée et babillarde, se roulait folle parmi les herbes. Enfin, prise d'un caprice mutin, elle se mit à cueillir une gerbe de fleurs. Un myosotis épanoui la faisait bondir jusqu'à la rive, les pâquerettes la rappelaient en balançant leurs tiges frêles; elle allait gravement, à travers le jardin du bon Dieu; elle aurait voulu que ses bras s'ouvrirent plus larges pour tout embrasser.

Soudain, elle poussa un léger cri; en s'agenouillant entre deux touffes, elle avait aperçu le collier.

"Oh! grand'mère, venez voir!"

La paysanne s'approcha. Son front, pur sous les rides, ne portait pas la trace des passions, son regard avait le calme de la sagesse.

"Ça," dit-elle, "c'est de l'or. Cher aux cupides, il porte souvent malheur. Laisse-le où il se trouve, au lieu de t'y brûler les doigts."

L'enfant, cédant à la curiosité de son âge, regarda longuement cet or et ces diamants qui dardaient sur elle leurs rayons aigus. Les fleurs et les papillons avaient sans doute moins d'éclat, mais leurs couleurs, plus variées, étaient plus douces au regard. La petite fille secoua la tête et retourna à ses pâquerettes.

"Des fleurs, grand'mère, ça vaut mieux que ces pierres-là. N'est-ce pas, grand'mère?"

"C'est le monde qui vaudrait mieux, chère innocente, s'il pensait comme toi."

Le gamin attacha son bouquet, et la vieille paysanne, du bout de son bâton, poussa le collier dans la rivière.



ENLIGHTENING THE WORLD

THE young man sat with the girl of his choice
In the Battery Park that night,
And the two looked out on the beautiful Bay
In a dream of sweet delight.

"I wonder," he said, as his eyes fell on
The Statue of Liberty tall,
Which rose like a ghost in the shadowy gloom,
"Why they have that light so small."

"I know," said the girl, as she blushed and tried
As hard as ever could be
To slip from his arm, "the smaller the light
The greater the liberty."

WILLIAM J. LAMPTON.



EXPLICIT DESCRIPTION

FIRST DRUMMER—How are the hotels out at Rockyville?
SECOND DRUMMER—One is bad, another is d—n bad, and the third is still worse!

FROM ONE TO TWELVE

By Lady Katharine Morgan

IN his letter, for fun, he said, "Meet me at one."
I said I would go, but I didn't!

"Will it suit you at two to have luncheon? Oh, do!"
I said I would go, but I didn't!

"For a trip to the sea—the train starts at three."
I said I would go, but I didn't!

He wired me at four, "I will ask you once more."
I said I would go, but I didn't!

More dead than alive, he said, "See me at five?"
I said I would go, but I didn't!

He sent roses at six, and I felt in a fix,
And I said I would go, but I didn't!

When seven was past, I thought, "Will his love last?"
I said I would go, but I didn't!

"Oh, for dinner at eight," he said; "don't be too late."
I said I would go, but I didn't!

"Oh, come and be mine!" was his longing at nine.
I said I would go, but I didn't!

"May I kiss you at ten, if you'll come to my den?"
I said I would go, but I didn't!

"A talk at eleven," he said, "'twould be heaven!"
I said I would go, but I didn't!

When twelve o'clock struck, he was down on his luck,
And I said I *won't* go, but I *did*!



AUNT DINAH (*to her son and heir*)—Heah, yo' Cotton C. Doyle Johnsing,
yo' take dat key outen yo' mouf! Yo' want to git de lockjaw?

Nov. 1901

THE OLD BEAU

NO love-lorn tale have I to tell,
 No story rapture tinged;
 I've been a foolish moth and—well,
 I've many times been singed;
 But ne'er a flame I've called a bane,
 Nor been by burning vexed—
 I let my wings grow out again
 And buzz around the next!

I've pressed the first love kiss on lips
 Since kissed—how many times!
 With love squeezed many finger-tips,
 And woven names in rhymes.
 The sweet young buds of womanhood
 I've schooled in love, and then
 Obliging aside have stood
 While they wed other men!

I've never really thought to win
 The girls I've wooed—'tis said,
 And very truly, "Fools rush in
 Where angels fear to tread."
 And yet I'm with the course of things
 Contented more than wroth,
 For, though I often singe my wings,
 I'm glad to be a moth!

ROY FARRELL GREENE.



WHY, OF COURSE

"WHAT is a picture hat, anyway?" asked Mr. Gildexter.
 "It must be the Gainsborough," replied Mr. Giddings.



ONE EXCEPTION

"DID you ever see a Scotch collie that was not named Laddie?"
 "Yes, we had one once,"
 "What was its name?"
 "Lassie."

THE CONDEMNED

By Hugh Sutherland

MARSDEN pulled himself together with a start when he realized that for fifteen minutes he had been staring at the opposite wall of his cell. Seated on the edge of his cot, with his chin in his hand, he had been steadily counting the stones—the top row of seven, then the next row of six, the next of seven, and so on to the bottom. The habit had grown on him until it annoyed him excessively. He knew just how many stones there were. He had added them up a hundred times, and had subtracted those where the whitewash showed whiter than elsewhere, until he was sick with the absurd monotony of it.

A half-oath escaped him as he got up and began the little walk of three steps each way that the walls allowed him. This gave him relief until he found that he was stepping with extraordinary care to avoid the cracks in the floor. He stopped, and a flush of helpless anger made his scalp tingle. Why should a man who had less than twenty hours to live be tortured by trivialities? The feeling that his mind was not his own had first come to him when he heard that his appeal to the Supreme Court for a new trial had been denied. It was then that he began to take such an exasperating interest in uninteresting details; and as the time left to him to live grew less, the annoyance became greater and more constant. He knew every square inch of the walls and ceiling, every spot where the whitewash had flaked off in little pieces, every speck of rust on the two-barred gates of his cell.

His fit of nervous exasperation died

away after a time, and he sat down on the edge of his cot. In the narrow space between the two-barred gates sat Bullock, the death-watch, tipped back in his chair and reading a pink sporting paper. Bullock was not an entertaining man, and Marsden did not try to talk to him. Instead, he sent his thoughts flying back over the years before the night when he met that man in the snow, under the pale, greenish light from a lonely street lamp, and shot him down in the middle of a sentence. Often he had tried to finish that sentence as the man himself would have finished it. This was as tiresome and profitless as a missing-word puzzle, but vastly more interesting. The only drawback was that he would never know the right answer.

There was little horror for him in the affair arranged for the next morning. The last scene had been before him so often that its deliberate ghastliness no longer made him shake with cold terror, as it had at first. Just one thing revolted him—the thought of the black cap. The rope, he thought, might have a pleasant roughness, but he could feel the loose, crinkly touch of that cloth, and it made his flesh creep.

Marsden had no remorse for the killing. The man, from his standpoint, had earned death ten times over. But he was sorry that he himself had to die, and without the satisfaction of fighting. Those stolid executioners, and the sheriff, too—he knew the sheriff would hate his work, for it was to be his first execution—would exact from him the full price demanded by the law. They would rob

him of good years of life—God knows how many. But for the accidents of fate suspicion would never have fallen on him, for he had not come under its shadow until months after the crime. He would have lived on, filled with the joy of living, consuming the breath of his existence as a man breathes the mountain air.

Now he was to be put to death, in the same manner as that reserved for cowardly murderers, men who had killed women, or taken life for money. It was not fair. And it was bitterly disappointing. Nine out of ten people believed him innocent—of course his wife did. And they scoffed at the circumstantial evidence that had put him in the cage of the condemned. His lawyers and several friends were at that moment at the State capital, straining every nerve for a pardon. But though he knew the Governor to be a man of many debts, he did not permit himself to hope.

"But if I were only out of this cursed place!" he thought. "I owe nothing to any man; and that black-guard would never threaten me again. By heaven, I would live!" He drove one fist against the other hand so savagely that Bullock looked up sharply.

Marsden threw himself back on the cot with an oath bitten in his teeth and clenched his hands behind his head. There was deathly quiet. He could hear the rustle of the paper as Bullock breathed, and the faint little coughs from silent men in the other cells for the condemned. Far away in the big prison an iron door shut with a muffled clang. He wished for a cigarette.

He did not know how long a time had passed when he heard footsteps in the corridor. Two men were coming. Bullock folded his paper and thrust it into his pocket as he got up. Marsden heard the steps grow louder; they stopped at his cell. There stood the warden and Nicoll, the prisoner's senior counsel. Nicoll looked nervous, and the warden's voice shook as he told Bullock to open the gates.

"Marsden," said Nicoll, "I don't bring bad news."

"You couldn't," said Marsden, and the reply struck him as rather good. He hoped the black cap had been remitted.

"Come away," said Nicoll. "The Governor has signed it. I took the first train."

Marsden had risen to a sitting position on the cot. He now got up and stood very still. It seemed like a dream—marvelously like a dream—and he was afraid to move lest he wake. The warden shook hands without looking into his eyes, and the three men passed out into the corridor. Bullock stood staring as they walked away. As they turned a corner Marsden looked back and saw him, with the pink sporting paper sticking out of the pocket of his blue coat.

"You are the first one I have ever taken from that cage to the outside," said the warden. "There'll be a row," he added.

"No, there won't," said Nicoll, sharply. "Everybody knows he was not properly convicted. And you weren't, Marsden. We were able to throw so much doubt on the case that the Board of Pardons simply had to act."

There were many details in the warden's office, but these did not interest Marsden. Sometimes all consciousness seemed to leave him, and he stood there, the shell of a man, with not a ripple of thought in his brain, and felt that he could not cry out or move a muscle, though the life he had so scantily won depended on it. Then he would start suddenly, while his thoughts raced forward like an engine that had lost its governor. He felt absently in his pockets. There was some money, a few letters and a bunch of keys that the warden had just handed him. Nicoll gave him a cigar, and he held it in his hand while they left the gray building and walked to the railroad station.

As the train rushed toward the city his thoughts flew faster than the whirling wheels. There seemed to be a mist over everything and voices mumbled at him from the fog. Nicoll's face was constantly changing

and changing. The plush seat in the car became a saddle, and he was riding furiously in the darkness. Then it sloped suddenly into the steep slant of a roof, and he was sliding swiftly to the edge. But the rope and the black cap no longer bothered him. He did not know where it was that Nicoll left him, nor what was said. When connected thought came to him again he was walking in a wide street that led to the centre of the city's night life.

Suddenly a savage joy that he was alive swept over him and blotted out everything else. He was pardoned—he was free! And not far away, over there where a soft glow showed in the clouded sky, were lights and laughter, and men and women who were also alive. And beyond, on the shady square, was his home! He was glad now that he had not allowed his wife to come to the court-room. Everything was for the best. She had always believed that he was innocent, and now he was going home, to her and to the boy. He would take them South for the rest of the Winter. It had begun to snow; a cold gust made him think of orange groves, and—

A man was walking rapidly toward him, and Marsden saw his face under a street lamp. It was a member of his club, and one of the unwilling witnesses against him at the trial. Before he knew it he had darted across the street, and his heart was jumping with terror lest he should be recognized.

The street grew lighter as he neared a great avenue. Hansoms and coupés whirled past, and he pulled his hat over his eyes in order that the dim faces he could see behind the windows might not know him. He had a terror of meeting people he knew. Once he thought he saw Bullock—in his blue suit, with the pink newspaper sticking out of the pocket.

When he was within a block of the avenue he stopped, shaking with a vague fear. He dared not pass that glare of light. There would be people there who knew him, and he did

not want to see them—just yet. He turned back. For hours, it seemed to him, he stumbled through dark places, keeping in the shadow of trees, and darting up side streets when anyone approached. Over and over again he said, "There is no danger"—and there was none. Yet he felt a worse terror than even in those endless days when he waited for the shock of the arrest.

He found himself at last under a remote street lamp, one of those ghastly affairs that cast a pale, greenish light. Black shadows were all around the outer rim of the glaring circle. There were trees on both sides of the street. When he remembered, he was staring at the white patch of snow under the lamp. He stooped and began to brush the snow away. Where it had been trodden he tore the hard mass with his fingers. At last he had a little space clear, and he bent over to look at it.

"Have you lost something?" said a voice from the shadows. Marsden leaped to his feet, staring. A policeman came into the light, grinning affably. Marsden's breath stopped, and his mouth and throat went dry. He turned and dashed up the street. Once, twice he heard the man call, but he ran on, and on again, until all was still. His heart was beating at a choking jump, and he was wet with the exertion of his flight. Up and down he wandered, turning hither and thither countless times. Muttering to himself, he stumbled blindly along what seemed to be a dark tunnel. It was a place where trees met overhead. A light appeared in front of him, and soon he could see dimly where he was putting his feet. He reached the end of the dark place and walked into the glare. It came from a street lamp. Under it the snow had been scraped away, showing a space of bare pavement.

Marsden closed his eyes and stepped slowly back into the darkness. Then he turned and walked away. This time he did not run. He was afraid to run. But he walked very straight, with the hair on the back of his head

tingling. When he was able to think he reasoned with himself.

"It was simply an accident," he said, and he knew he was lying. "I must remember this street and not come here again. But I am not sorry I did that"—he gritted his teeth on the words.

It seemed to him that days had passed since he reached the city, yet somewhere a clock was striking midnight. He was near his home, and suddenly he started toward it, rapidly. The avenue where the light and noise had been was almost deserted, and when he crossed the car tracks he could hear the humming of the cable underground.

There was a light in an upper room of his home, and when he heard the bell's muffled ring he knew it must be in a sick-room. His wife herself opened the door.

"Who are you?" she said as he stepped inside. Then she saw his face and cried out. The next moment she was in his arms, sobbing like a frightened child.

"I have been pardoned," he whispered, while he held her close. "We can go away now."

"Oh, yes," she said, shivering. "We will go away, far away from this hideous place. Freddie is better to-night. He did not know—what day it was. Some day we can tell him all about it. I knew—I knew you were innocent."

Marsden's breath stopped and his grasp tightened round the slender form.

"Oh, how cruel they were to my brave husband!" she whispered. "And you were silent! Why did you not tell them you were innocent?"

She raised her face and looked into his eyes. Marsden's lips were dry and a sudden sickness seized him.

"Why did you not tell them?" she said again. "Why——?"

Suddenly she tore herself free and

stared at his white face. Her hands were clenched against her cheeks.

"You—you killed him!" she moaned, and moved away, slowly. "You killed him!" Her eyes, wide with terror, fell from his face to his hands. Marsden stood dumb. Even then he could not feel sorry, but he knew she could never understand, and a deadly despair swept over him.

"I will go," he said, dully. "Let me see the boy and I will go."

He took a step forward. But at the first movement his wife darted past him and stood at the foot of the stairs, directly in his path. There was no need for her to speak. And Marsden could not think of anything to say. He could only stare helplessly at the accusing figure, knowing that he would always feel that aching loneliness. He wondered if her eyes would always have that look of fear, and something more terrible. His senses were slipping from him. The light seemed to get more dim, until he could see only the figure of his wife amid dark shadows. Suddenly all strength went from him and he sank to the floor.

He started as a hand fell on his shoulder. The gray light of early morning came through the high, barred window, and the warden was standing beside the cot. Marsden looked at him vacantly. The warden was disconcerted.

"A dream?" he asked, because he felt that he must say something. Marsden covered his face with his hands for half a minute. Then he said, slowly:

"No. That was not a dream. Is it time to——?"

"Yes," answered the warden, and he added something quite unnecessary. "I am sorry," he said. Marsden turned his face to the window, and just the shadow of a weary smile flickered across it.

"You are kind," he said. "But I am not sorry."



MISS WILLARD'S DOG

By Ruth Parsons Milne

MISS WILLARD sat disconsolate in her drawing-room and eyed sadly the highly bred Boston terrier that lay at her feet. Opposite her sat a man, equally disconsolate, who eyed the terrier not sadly but defiantly, while the terrier in his turn fixed the man with a glance of utter detestation such as only a dog can command. Whenever the man spoke the dog showed his teeth, a proceeding that evidently made both the man and the girl still more disconsolate.

"But it isn't as if I had ever done anything to the little beast," said the man, argumentatively.

Miss Willard frowned.

"Don't call him a beast, Jack," she said. "That's just the worst of it. If you had ever kicked him—" the man shook his head—"or hit him, or even trod on him by accident, I should understand it. But you've always been very nice to him—and a dog's instincts are so keen."

The man frowned in his turn.

"Why, hang it all!" he said, combatively, "I hope you don't think that I'm a villain, Louise, just because your dog has happened to take a dislike to me."

"I don't know what to think," she answered, dolefully. "I've always been so fond of Michael, and relied so on his opinion of people, that I don't see how you can expect me not to mind what he says now."

"So you mean to—to refuse me, just because your dog doesn't like me?"

Miss Willard looked down to hide the fact that her eyes were full of tears. "Speak to him nicely, please,

Jack," she said, beseechingly; "perhaps he'll change his mind."

"Here, Michael," said the man, obediently. "Good doggie, nice little fellow. Come, Michael."

"Grr-r-r-r," said Michael, loudly, with an unamiable roll of his prominent eyes.

"Oh, Michael," exclaimed his mistress, despairingly, "how can you be so dreadful!"

There was a silence in the room after this ineffectual attempt at reconciliation. The man broke it, saying, slowly:

"So you really like even a dog better than you do me?"

"It isn't that," said Miss Willard, chokingly; "it's his instinct, you know."

The man shrugged his shoulders.

"Well," he said, rising, "there seems only one thing left for me to do, and that's to go."

"Can't we be friends still?" appealed Miss Willard.

"I suppose that, too, is for Michael to decide," he answered, a little formally.

Miss Willard flushed and cast at Michael a glance that was not altogether one of admiration.

"I really don't think I can let Michael decide everything," she said, with a tremulous smile. "Won't you please be friends?"

"I shall be delighted," the man answered, still formally, "even if I should incur Michael's further displeasure." And Michael, hearing his name spoken by that detested voice, snarled viciously in answer.

To say that Jack Langdon was either as annoyed or as depressed as

he had tried to appear would be seriously to overstate his condition. When a man is in love with a young woman any obstacle to the happy outcome of the affair, short of the young woman's declaring that she cannot and will not love him in return, has a way of seeming a light and airy nothing. And when the young woman gives as the reason for her refusal merely the detestation that her dog exhibits toward the applicant for her favor, surely a moderate amount of hope may be permitted to the man, however despairing he may consider it advisable to appear. So Langdon, as he walked meditatively back to his rooms, was not the heart-broken mortal that Miss Willard was picturing him the while she wept pathetically in her drawing-room, declining Michael's nose proffered as a handkerchief.

"Confounded little beast!" Langdon remarked as he was dressing for dinner.

"Yessir?" said his man, apologetically.

Langdon laughed.

"If a dog didn't like you, Norton, and you wanted him to, how would you go about making him?"

Norton coughed.

"I haven't had much experience with dogs myself, sir," he said, discreetly, "but they do say that to take all the care of them yourself—make them look to you for everything, as you may say——"

"Oh, it's not my dog," Langdon interrupted, "it's—another person's."

"Don't it like him, sir?" asked Norton, respectfully.

"It doesn't like me," said Langdon, impatiently. "The dog isn't mine, and it doesn't like me, and I want it to like me because it's inconvenient this way. See?"

"Yessir," said Norton. "You might take it things to eat, sir. But animals is queer."

"Deuced queer," said Langdon, reflectively, as he slipped on his dinner coat; "deuced queer."

He foresaw a great deal of vexation of spirit for himself, and worse

for Miss Willard, in the effort to prove to her that her dog's dislike for him was a molehill instead of the mountain she was making it appear. How infinitely easier it would be, he reflected, to persuade the dog to like him. He was a comparative stranger to Michael—even Miss Willard's devotion to the dog did not lead her to take him to the dinners, dances and house parties that had been the mediums of her rather brief acquaintance with Langdon. Perhaps it was simply because he was unfamiliar that Michael detested him, though Miss Willard assured him that Michael had never before acted in this manner. Or, he meditated, with a secret thrill of satisfaction, perhaps Michael was jealous, not of his affection for Miss Willard, but in that subtle consciousness that dogs have, of hers for him.

"Poor beast!" he mused; "I'll make him like me."

For weeks Langdon haunted the houses of all his friends, men or women, who were dog lovers. Every dog liked him, came at his call, did his best tricks at his command and ate the reward of cracker or sugar with an apologetic air that seemed to say:

"I'd have done that little thing for *you* anyway, old man."

That is to say, every dog except Michael. Michael steadfastly retained his attitude of uncompromising hostility, retreated growling from the sticky dainties with which Langdon tried to bribe him into good nature, and reduced his mistress to the verge of tears and of retraction. In fact, if Langdon had pressed the matter . . . but he did nothing of the sort. He was as determined to win over the dog as was Michael not to be won. To be defeated by the dislike of a Boston terrier seemed too trivially absurd! So he inquired as to dogs' tastes, read books on dogs and treated Michael with a courteous patience that finished the conquest of Miss Willard's heart. But all his diligence was of no avail; Michael's dislike remained as strong as ever and

his display of it as gratuitously insulting.

"Confounded little beast!" Langdon repeated, a month later.

"Yessir," said Norton, this time in acquiescence. "Same beast, sir?"

"Yes," said Langdon, savagely. "It's a confounded little Boston terrier. And it won't like me and I can't make it like me, and I'm damned if I don't quit trying to make it like me!"

Norton was sympathetically silent.

"Can you suggest any way?" asked Langdon, laying down his brushes with a whack.

"They do say, sir," said Norton, "that the only way to make a dog like you, if he don't like you, is to make him look to you for everything——"

"You said that before," said Langdon, "and I told you then it wasn't my dog."

"Yessir," said Norton, meekly, and went on brushing the coat he held.

Langdon eyed him suspiciously. "What do you mean?" he asked at last.

Norton brushed assiduously. "I was thinking, sir," he said, apologetically, "how very fortunate it would be, so to speak, if the dog, sir, should get lost and you was to find him."

"Humph!" said Langdon, meditatively. "I don't see——"

"Why, begging your pardon, sir, you see, till you found his mistress for him he'd have to look to you for everything, sir, and——"

"Norton," said his master, solemnly, "you're a good thing."

"Yessir, thank you, sir," said Norton, gratefully.

In less than a week after this conversation, Morgan, Miss Willard's maid, was taking Michael out for an airing at the end of a stout leather strap, when she met Norton taking a morning stroll in the same neighborhood. By what wiles Norton managed to distract attention from the

precious Michael, after having first, with his courtliest air, taken possession of the strap; how, the moment her back was turned, a villainous-looking man, whom Morgan had observed, smuggled the poor dog off in a big basket, which also she had observed; how she described the horrible event to her mistress, omitting, needless to say, all mention of the courtly Norton—these matters may safely be left to the reader's imagination. A liberal reward was offered in all the papers, investigations were set on foot by the police, and Miss Willard mourned night and day, all in vain. Langdon endeared himself still more to her by his untiring sympathy with her and by forbearing to press his attentions on her at a time many a man would have deemed opportune.

And in the meantime Langdon's rooms were in a state of repair, he said everywhere, and he was only to be found at the club. No one listened outside his carefully closed door, or there might have been some wonder expressed as to the probable connection between repairs and the unmistakable growling of an enraged dog. For to Langdon's disgust, the subduing of this refractory animal was no easy matter. Secured to a Morris chair by a string, without his mistress, his cushion or his daily walk, Michael's temper failed to show speedy improvement. For the first days of his captivity he snarled as viciously at Langdon as ever he had done in the days of his freedom, and if it had not been for Norton the dog would speedily have been returned to his mistress and left to his own evil devices. But the untiring Norton mixed the dog biscuit and milk that Langdon administered, and suggested expedient after expedient that Langdon first scorned, then tried.

"Does he know how to sit up and shake hands, sir?" queried Norton one day, when Langdon, in despair, was threatening to return the dog without further ado.

"If he does, he won't do it for me," said Langdon. "Watch him now. Sit up, Michael!"

"Grr-r-r-r," responded Michael, showing a fine array of teeth.

"May I try him, sir?" asked Norton. "He don't seem to object to me much—" and Langdon gave a nod of assent.

"Sit up, Michael!" Michael sat up instantly. "Give me your paw!" commanded Norton. "There, sir," as Michael obeyed with alacrity, "he knows how."

"Much good it does me!" said Langdon, turning away in disgust.

"If I was you, sir," suggested Norton, respectfully, "I wouldn't let him have anything to eat till he'd sat up for it."

"He'll starve first," said Langdon, turning back to view the recalcitrant Michael.

"No, sir," said Norton, "begging your pardon, sir, I think he'll sit up first."

On the tenth day after Michael's loss he reappeared, led by a rough-looking man, who said he "didn't need no reward," and slipped unobtrusively away when Morgan went to summon Miss Willard.

"He was the one who stole him, mum," said Morgan, eagerly; but Miss Willard was too occupied in rejoicing over her restored Michael to wonder why a man should have stolen a dog and not have waited for the reward.

That very evening Langdon called. He had felt that perhaps it would be wiser to wait longer before appearing, but he was too anxious to see the working of his experiment for delay. Miss Willard was not in the drawing-room, but only a moment elapsed before Langdon heard the tap of her heels on the hall floor and the patter and scratch of Michael's footsteps.

"He's back!" said Miss Willard, ecstatically. Then she added, hastily: "But I can't expect you to be as glad of that as I am."

"I am, though," declared Langdon, stoutly, "even more glad, since I'm glad for your sake."

Miss Willard flushed. "I really think Michael's very unkind not to like you," she said.

Langdon shrugged his shoulders. "Perhaps, now that he's seen what a thief is, he won't have such an abhorrence of my character," he said, with a smile. "Here, Michael, nice dog."

Michael hesitated, and Miss Willard shook her head despondingly. Then, to her surprise, Michael walked gravely over to Langdon's outstretched hand, sniffed it and licked it graciously. Langdon patted the dog's head.

"Not so bad after all, am I, old fellow?" he questioned, manfully suppressing his glee. "Let's make up and be friends. Sit up, Michael!" And to Miss Willard's unbounded astonishment Michael sat up, and then, unbidden, extended what Langdon was pleased to call "the paw of peace."

Langdon turned to Miss Willard with the light of triumph in his eye.

"You see, Michael was wrong," he said, slowly. "He admits it. Won't you?" He paused, and Miss Willard flushed.

"Do you really want me to?" she said, with downcast eyes. "I thought I had been so foolish you didn't care any longer."

An hour later Miss Willard said, softly, "Jack, I have a secret to tell you."

"Yes," said Langdon, apprehensively.

"I think I know why Michael didn't like you," she explained.

"Why?" queried Langdon, with interest.

"He—he was jealous—because I did," she said, with a little laugh.

"Why does he like me now, then?" asked Langdon, sternly.

"Because," she said, demurely, "he saw he'd got to. He's a very clever dog."

Langdon nodded. "Yes," he said, "he's a very clever dog, sweetheart." So the talk on the couch in the drawing-room went happily on, while opposite, beneath a chair, lay Michael, disconsolate, watching with bulging, melancholy eyes.

AN INEQUITABLE ESTOPPEL

By Henry Rand

If your case is weak, abuse the other fellow.—*Legal Maxim.*

IN a waking dream of his disreputable past, Charles Fenno Fenner, Esq., lay in a little room at the private hospital of St. Swithin. The door into the men's corridor stood open, as was the rule, but across the threshold stretched a screen, high enough to prevent the patient from looking out, yet so low that an attendant might peep in. The place was very still that night, for the cracked bell of St. Swithin's chapel had just rung nine—taps—and even the soft rush of the nurses speeding on shoes of silence had ceased. Only from the room across the hall came hushed laughter, where Miss Anderson, the pretty new night nurse, was trying—officially—to persuade young Phillips to obey the law and let his light be put out.

Had Fenner been in his usual condition of alert wakefulness he might have guessed the situation, and—because mortal sickness had not made him malicious—would have tried to avert the impending doom. But Fenner was in the first happy drowse that comes, through morphia, from quick surcease of pain, and something in the murmuring voices, becoming ever lower and softer, harmonized perhaps with his own dreams. So he lay until the catastrophe—a suppressed scream, a tenor oath, a woman's voice low but angry; then silence, and a moment later, Miss Boldt, superintendent of nurses, her face flushed, came to his bedside.

How Fenner had struck a flash of human emotion from the withered

breast of Miss Boldt need not be detailed, clever as the feat undoubtedly was. Why he had taken the trouble to try it concerns the story. He had been a successful trial lawyer, with a wonderful facility for guessing the thoughts of others and a dominant desire to succeed. But he had no fixed moral principles; his nature was strong, and—he had not contented himself with winning juries. Therefore in his attempt both to do and to enjoy, he found himself, still young, broken in health, and a few weeks previous he had been driven to consult the great specialist who was the head of St. Swithin's. That gentleman gave sorry comfort. "The old story," said he; "lived your life already; I can't make you over. You are now in such a condition that the slightest return to your old mode of life, any strong emotion, in fact, will in all probability kill you. Nevertheless," he added, "if you will go to my hospital, stay in bed and take treatment, I may put off the inevitable for a little."

Fenner considered. He realized suddenly that he did not wish to go out of the world just then, at any rate not until he had straightened up a few private matters; besides, he had several interesting cases on appeal. Accordingly he went to the hospital, and there for the first time knew how tired he was and how grateful rest and quiet were to him. He enjoyed, too, the ministrations of the deft-handed nurses and their quiet, impersonal sympathy, though he was greatly surprised to find himself taking them as impersonally as they did him; and this despite the fact that

several of them were very good-looking. "I must indeed be changed," smiled Fenner. But he was mistaken.

He began to be strangely interested in the character of the superintendent. She was a middle-aged woman, colorless and cold, and, as Fenner soon found out, greatly feared by the nurses and respected by the doctors. She was indefatigable in the care of her patients, but with no more personal feeling for them than the surgeon's knife.

With a queer perversion of his passion for success Fenner determined to win from this machine some liking for himself, and with his uncanny instinct unerringly discovered the vulnerable point. This scientific old maid, who for twenty years had lived in the hospital, without friends and without love, was conquered by cunningly veiled appeals to the one trait least apparent in her make-up—her maternal feeling. "An encysted sort of maternity," meditated he, "but reachable." No great feat, perhaps, for the trained advocate whose life had been spent in playing on human hearts as on a harp, but one sufficiently unexpected to amaze greatly the rest of the staff of St. Swithin's.

However it was done, it suffices that Miss Boldt was much in Fenner's room, talking of her work, of literature and what not. She never failed to come to him for a little while about nine in the evening to see that his medicine had been taken, that he needed nothing, and to tuck him up in bed like a child. But on the night of the shocking discovery of the indiscretion of the new nurse, her maidenly feelings were far too outraged to admit of tenderness, even to an innocent pet patient. Fenner, who, with his usual quickness, had divined what had happened, knew better than to push further his approaches at so unpropitious a time. To her perfunctory questions he made short reply, and she soon swept out, a gleam that boded ill for the culprits still in her eye.

"Taking it out on me," grinned

Fenner, "and to-morrow remorse and additional motherly feeling to make up for it. I wonder why I am doing this, anyway; what's the use? But—" and here he went happily to sleep. Unwittingly he played the game without stakes as naturally as the penniless gambler plays *solitaire*.

The following morning after breakfast a nurse peeped into the room.

"Mr. Phillips would like to see you; may he?" she said.

"Enter the villain," replied Fenner; then seeing her look of bewilderment, he added, "Certainly; glad to see him."

Phillips was a volatile young football player, whose exuberant spirits and good nature in calamity made him at once the nuisance and the favorite of the men's corridor. He came rolling himself in, sitting in a hospital chair with a bandaged leg stretched out stiffly. He wore an unwonted solemnity of expression and watched the nurse distrustfully as she departed, adjusting the screen behind her. Drawing close to the bed and speaking low, he said:

"Mr. Fenner, I'm in a scrape."

"What's the matter, Rob?" was the response.

"Don't talk so loud or these rubberers around here will hear us," said Phillips, mysteriously; "regular nest of spies they are." His English was of the approved University brand.

Fenner's expression being one of innocent surprise, the boy went on: "You're a lawyer, aren't you?" and continued without waiting for an answer: "Well, I'd like to get your advice, only—you know—" uneasily—"it seems a bit caddish to tell—"

"Consider me your professional adviser," said Fenner, gravely, "then it will be all right."

"Well," visibly relieved, "I'll tell you. You know Miss Anderson?" He paused.

"Little curly-headed one—pretty? Yes."

"Well, she was in my room last night, and I was chaffing her—trying to make conversation, you know, and

—we got to fooling and—” he blundered and stopped in confusion.

“And you were kissing her when Miss Boldt came in,” interposed Fenner.

“Yes,” said Phillips, explosively finishing the sentence, “in those cursed sneak shoes.” Looking up suspiciously he added: “Did the old fiend tell you? I thought I heard her go into your room.”

“No,” said the older man. “I was lying half-asleep, and heard enough to make a good guess. But,” he went on, “what do you want of a lawyer, anyway? It isn’t a penal offense to kiss a girl, and all she can do is to have you put out of the hospital, which is what you’ve been shouting for this last week.”

“Oh, I don’t care about myself,” said Rob, “it’s the girl. You see Miss Boldt will write home to her folks all about it—why she is fired—and she’ll be disgraced and all that—and of course I can’t offer her money—and I didn’t know but that you might be able to stop it some way.”

“You’re a nice sort of a Lovelace to let loose among a lot of innocent nurses, aren’t you?” said the legal adviser, severely, “tampering with the unsophisticated affections of a young girl. Seems to me—”

But Rob broke in, hotly: “I like that! ‘Unsophisticated!’ Do you know what she said to me—the way it started? Well, I was pretending I didn’t want the light out, and by way of saying something funny I asked her to look under the bed first and see if there was a man there. Well sir,” went on the young fellow, impressively, “she moved up close to the bed—right within reach—and looked at me and said: ‘I don’t believe there is a man under the bed, or on it, either!’”

Fenner laughed aloud. “But,” he asked, “what can I do? She’s expelled, and that’s the end of it.”

“No, she isn’t,” explained Phillips; “you see so many of the girls have had to go ‘special’ that they’re short-handed—that’s why she had to go on night duty, though she’s only in her

first year; and the old dragon is too wily to bounce her now. She’ll wait, Alice says, till someone dies or gets better, and releases a nurse or two, and then—out she goes. And I thought,” he continued, “you are so strong with Miss Boldt you might tell her she hadn’t any right to put her out—threaten her with a lawsuit, you know—or—throw some sort of bluff into her—”

“I’m afraid, my dear fellow,” began Fenner, when suddenly a thought, straight from the Pit, flashed across his consciousness and left its imprint on his face.

“Got it?” anxiously inquired the observant client.

Fenner paid no attention to the question. After the manner of his kind he was arguing out his idea in speech. “The same old principle,” said he, to himself. “Lord, everything can be reduced to principle—Dewey at Manila, Jenner and his vaccine, trial of Queen Caroline—I swear it’s enough to justify the old alchemists and their universal solvent.” Then suddenly: “Phillips, what do you do when you run up against a heavier eleven?”

Rob stared blankly, but promptly replied: “Oh, hammer around and find one of their weak spots; those big teams are often weak in defense, you know.”

“Exactly!” shouted the other, “exactly! The offensive-defensive, my boy—Captain Mahan—the argument *ad hominem*!” Fenner was in the clouds, gabbling swiftly to himself: “Of course, on any theory of probabilities it wouldn’t happen once in a thousand times, but—but the little gods themselves wouldn’t let such a joke as that fail.”

Rob looked aghast. “If you aren’t feeling well, Mr. Fenner,” said he, “you’d better—”

But Fenner had recovered. “It’s all right, my boy; don’t be alarmed. I was wandering, true, but in regions of lofty thought. What time does Miss Anderson come on duty tonight?” he inquired.

“Seven-thirty,” said Phillips.

"And she is the one who answers calls—rings—from the patients?"

"Yes, she is the only one on the corridor then. Why?"

Rob got no answer. "Get out," said Fenner, "I want to think about it. If your friend knows something maybe we'll win yet. In the meantime, go away and leave me alone."

Miss Boldt came earlier than usual to her patient's room that night; she half felt that in some way, under stress of angry feelings, she had been unkind the night before, and she remembered how sensitive he was. She recognized, too, a subtle change in his manner. He was evidently glad to see her, but there was a something, a certain languidness of voice, a wistfulness in the tired, boyish face, though it was evident he was bravely trying to conceal it.

"You are not so well, Mr. Fenner," she said, anxiously; "tell me, are you in pain?" She took the chair by his bedside and felt his pulse.

Fenner turned his head wearily on the pillow. His watch was on the stand on the other side—8.52. "No, Miss Boldt," said he, with a pathetic smile, "no, I am in no pain, but—" he hesitated, "I think I am losing my mind—softening of the brain, you call it."

"Nonsense!" briskly replied the superintendent, in her best professional manner. "What's the matter with you, anyway?"

"Miss Boldt," he spoke softly, "you'll think I'm foolish, but to tell the truth—you see I have been pretty much alone in the world all my life; mother died when I was a little chap—I never had a sister—and—when I was well and strong I didn't mind. But, somehow, since I have been here you have all been so kind to me, and you especially—I begin—now—to know—to feel—" He stopped brokenly, and Miss Boldt saw a gleam of moisture in the dark eyes. For a fleeting moment the sure instinct that protects the maiden, young or old, gave her pause; then all the woman surged up.

"Poor boy," she whispered, ten-

derly, and stroked the tumbled hair from the white forehead. "Poor, lonesome boy, and I have done so little for you!" The cracked bell of St. Swithin's Chapel clanged nine—taps. Simply, naturally, as a child with its mother, his arms closed round her neck, and naturally, simply, as a mother with her child, Miss Boldt bent down and kissed him.

"Your medicine, Mr.— Oh, excuse me! I knocked, but—" Miss Anderson, with a tray in her hand, stood in the room.

Miss Boldt rose quickly to her feet; one furious glance she gave toward the man in bed, but the professional mask had settled on his features—there was no speculation in them. She turned to the nurse, and that young woman gave her look for look. No mask was there, and there the trapped victim could read but too plainly. Twice she moistened her lips and essayed to speak, but no word came. The next moment she had crossed the threshold, shutting the door behind her with a crash that resounded startlingly through the silence of the corridor.

Miss Anderson dropped the tray on the bed and then collapsed on it herself—both acts in violation of all rules made and provided.

"You're a dear!" she exclaimed, and giggled weakly; "and she—she shut the door and slammed it! It's too funny—" and then looked up, startled, and beheld a miracle. For the deep-chested, virile laugh of her co-conspirator was not that of a sick man; underneath his jacket the broad breast seemed to have filled and rounded, the lines of dissipation and pain were gone from the flushed face, and the bold eyes were brilliant with life. She looked and saw the handsome, reckless scapegrace of other days.

Startled she was, but apparently not frightened at the metamorphosis; she moved a little toward the head of the bed and held up a bottle. "You didn't take your medicine, after all, Mr. Fenner."

Fenner laughed contagiously. "Oh,

yes I did!" he said, and puckered up his mouth.

The girl looked swiftly at the tightly closed door. "Wouldn't you—" she had moved very near and had dropped the medicine bottle—"wouldn't you," she said, with shining eyes, "like something to—to—take the taste out?"

Some months later Miss Boldt sat in her office complacently reading that portion of the new annual catalogue of St. Swithin's Home and Hospital which dealt with the nurses' training school. She had written it herself and felt that her work was good. Instantly, without warning, her feelings changed. She became acutely conscious that in some mysterious way she had done a foolish thing and that someone was jeering at her. So strong was the obsession that she started up in haste and glanced furtively around, but saw no one. Then the strong-minded woman of science pulled herself together

with a shrug of self-scorn. "I'm getting as bad as those hysterical women up-stairs," she said aloud; "neurasthenia must be contagious." But for once the rationalistic explanation was wrong. Miss Boldt did not know that the yet unregenerate ghost of one who was in life a lawyer had peered mistily over her shoulder and chuckled as he read the judgment roll of his last victory:

8

ty years of age. All members of the Training School are required to exhibit the highest degree of propriety and decorum in their professional relations with patients. Any violation of this rule is invariably followed by instant dismissal.

FIRST YEAR CLASS

Anderson, Alice A.
Apworth, Mary

Syrac



NO HYPOCRISY

HE—Why is young Mrs. Gayboy wearing mourning?

SHE—For her husband's first wife, of course. She is so sorry she died, you know.



WHEN THE TEMPERATURE FELL

"I'M so worried about Brother Henry," said Clara to her caller. "I do hope he'll come out all right."

"How long was he sent up for?" asked Mr. Hunker, sympathetically.



DESTINY AVERTED

"WHEN the storm struck the yacht I was just about to go below."
"Yes, I know, but fortunately your life was spared."

THE WILY OLD MAN

IN lieu of a more definite name let us call him the Old Man, with the hope that Johnnie and his brothers will never be guilty of similar disrespect.

The Old Man possessed not only wealth, but a wife and six children; also, he supported a member of the great tribe of Poor Relations, a maiden whose greatest fault was not youth, and who was the daughter of his only brother, for long a troubadour in Paradise. This particular Poor Relation had proved herself very useful as nursemaid to her six cousins, but now that the smallest cousin had followed her elders into the great land of Boarding School, the Old Man had no more use for her. So he consulted with his wife.

Now there was also a Young Lawyer, who likewise possessed many things, including a degree, a fine office and a first-class fountain pen. In fact, he had everything a Young Lawyer could wish for, except a client.

One day the Young Lawyer was sitting in his fine office, trying to Christian Science himself into the belief that he was not hungry, when he heard a knock at the door.

"At last," thought he, "my long-wished-for client has come!" But no! A small gum-chewer in a blue uniform stood there.

"I guess dis is fer youse," he remarked, and thrusting a letter into

the Young Lawyer's hand, he departed with slow moving feet and rapidly working jaws.

The letter was from the Old Man, and was a summons for the Young Lawyer to hurry to the writer's house and draw up said writer's will.

It was a hard race between the Young Lawyer and his shadow as to which would get to the house first. He found the Old Man in bed, looking pale. The Young Lawyer took a seat and drew a long breath, his fountain pen and the will.

Among the numerous bequests was: "To my beloved niece, Anna Marie, for her kindness and devotion to my children, the sum of fifty thousand dollars."

As the Young Lawyer left the room he encountered the Poor Relation, and instantly fell a victim to the charms of her twenty-seven-inch waist, her sunset hair and her turkey egg freckles.

Two months later they were married.

"I care not for wealth," said the Young Lawyer, "I care only for her own sweet self."

"Such sentiments are rare nowadays," remarked the Old Man to his wife, as the carriage bearing the happy pair drove off. "True love is a sweet thing; it is not for me to spoil such a sentiment with the vulgar dross of gold."

And he tore up the will.

GABRIELLE ASPLAND.



LITERALLY INTERPRETED

SYMPATHIZING FRIEND—Did you love your husband so very dearly?
 THE WIDOW—I should say so!
 SYMPATHIZING FRIEND—Yes, but did you?